PAUL SIMON
HIS NEW MASTERPIECE

NICK DRAKE
THE MAKING OF A GENIUS

MOJO
Music Magazine

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NOEL GALLAGHER
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
KEITH JARRETT
CALEXICO &
MORE

INSIDE THE COURT OF...

JONI MITCHELL

JAMS! JAZZ! HOLLYWOOD BABYLON!

LOVE
"WE FOUGHT TOOTH AND NAIL!"

THE ZOMBIES
COLIN BLUNSTONE'S ODESSEY

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QUEEN
THE MAN WHO COULD HAVE BEEN MERCURY

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES
BLESS THEIR COTTON SOCKS!

SEX PISTOLS + GENERATION X = GENERATION SEX!

PLUS
MINK DEVILLE
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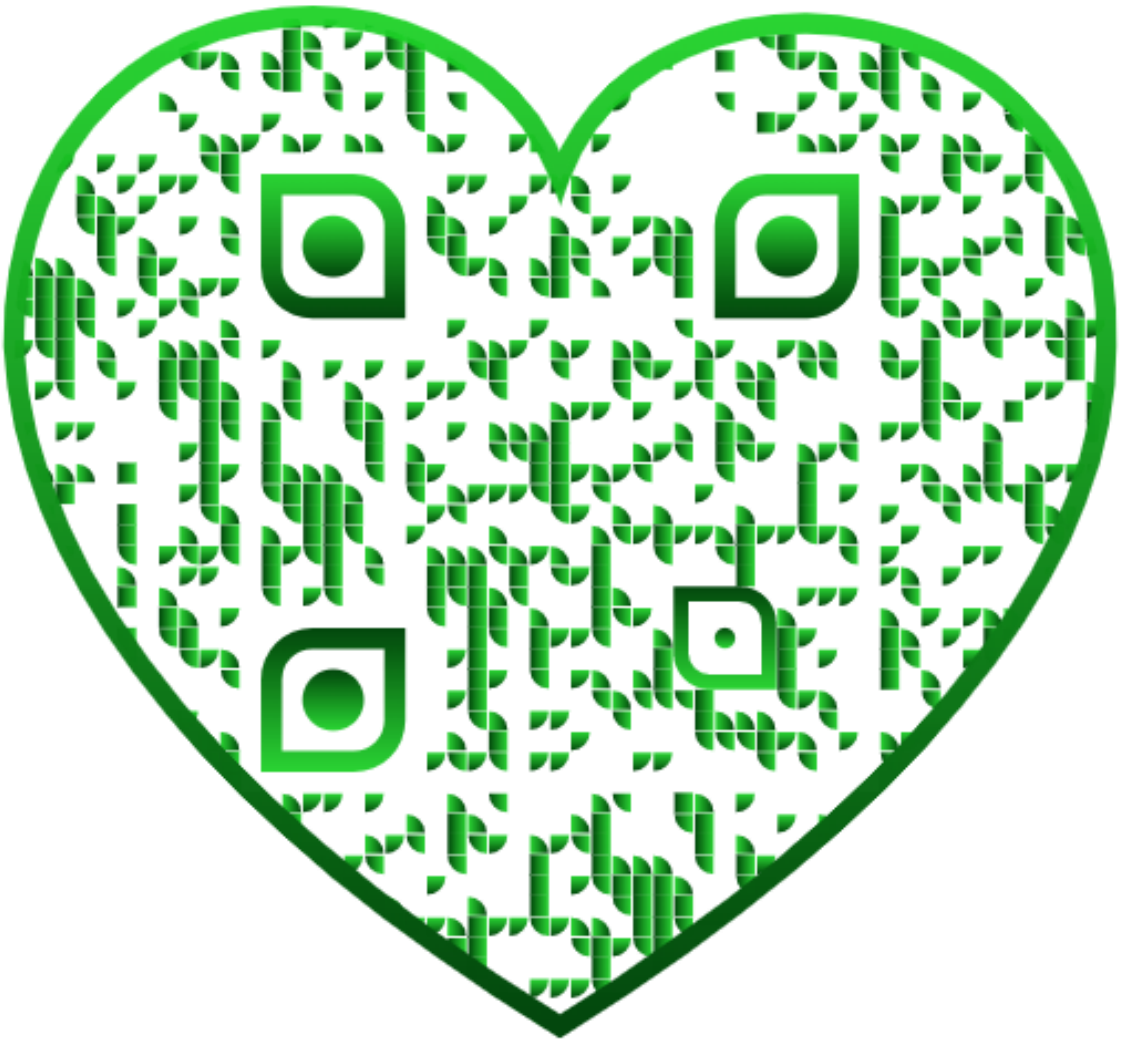
GANG OF FOUR
BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS
RYUICHI SAKAMOTO



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Expanded 30th anniversary re-issue of The Lemonheads' classic 1993 album. The breakthrough record that took American alt rock global & catapulted Evan Dando into the hearts of a generation. With a wealth of unreleased demos, alternative versions & rarities.

RVG
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FIRE RECORDS LP / CD
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DECISIVE PINK
(KATE NV + ANGEL DERADOORIAN)
TICKET TO FAME
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD
Their debut calls on NV's experimental pop leanings & Deradoorian's taste for atmosphere & otherworldliness, this is electronic pop at it's finest. "Substantive & thoroughly hypnotic" NY Times.

CURRENT AFFAIRS
OFF THE TONGUE
TOUGH LOVE LP / CD
Debut LP from Glasgow/Berlin 4 piece Current Affairs, written from within the world of crumbling services, broken bonds & wounded spirits, Off the Tongue rolls off an ecstatic rage, filled with hope for you, them & everyone else.

THEY WATCH US FROM THE MOON
CHRONICLE: ACT 1, THE ASCENSION
NEW HEAVY SOUNDS LP / CD
Cosmic space metal, with riffs as heavy as Osmium, melodic lead guitar and sublime soaring twin female vocals. A unique proposition in any genre.

TANLINES
THE BIG MESS
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD
Tanlines share their most intimate and personal work yet on. The Big Mess pivots from the band's synth-pop origins to a more organic, guitar-driven songwriting approach.

LIGHTNING DUST
NOSTALGIA KILLER
WESTERN VINYL LP / CD
Sticky with unresolved, living feelings, on Nostalgia Killer Lightning Dust's Amber Webber sings of romantic warfare channeling Stevie Nicks, while echoing the spirits of Grace Slick and Beth Gibbons.

RITUAL HOWLS
VIRTUE FALTERS
FELTE LP / CD
The Detroit trio's fifth album is a cinematic blend of twangy industrial rock, metal, noise, baritone vocals, and macabre lyrics. It's their most urgent, focused album to date.

ROXY GORDON
CRAZY HORSE NEVER DIED
PARADISE OF BACHELORS LP / CD
The first reissue of the 1988 album by Choctaw, Assiniboine, and Texan poet, activist, and musician Roxy Gordon (First Coyote Boy) (1945–2000), acclaimed by Townes Van Zandt and Leonard Cohen.

BEACH FOSSILS
BUNNY
BAYONET RECORDS LP / CD
Earning their stature as one of the most definitive and enduring bands of the last decade, 'Bunny' is Beach Fossils' most vivid, grounded and personal work to date.

VULTURE FEATHER
LIMINAL FIELDS
FELTE LP / CD
The debut album from ex-members of Wilderness is post/pre/future/art punk – amorphous vessels encapsulating the dream-like, liminal fields that all beings are passing through from one moment to the next.

NICHOLAS ALLBROOK
MANGANESE
SPINNING TOP RECORDS LP
Emotional, geological, psycho-geographical: this is the terrain of Manganese, Allbrook's fourth album away from life as front person and co-founder of Pond. A psyche-pop wonderland that hums with life.

HOUSE OF ALL
HOUSE OF ALL
TINY GLOBAL PRODUCTIONS LP / CD
Ex-Fall members. "HOUSE Of ALL has a unique energy, each member playing sharply around motorik grooves against Bramah's mystical lyrics without a hint of compromise."

LAUREN HELENE GREEN
OUTER HIGHWAY REALMS
ROYAL OAKIE CD
Outer Highway Realms is the debut instrumental album from Lauren Helene Green (Tan Cologne), collecting observations on New Mexico's slow desert – echoes of time & space, morning reflections, & sunset drives.

WHISKERMAN
CHAMPIONS (DELUXE EDITION)
ROYAL OAKIE CD
Originally released in 2016, Champions has become a fan favourite, widely regarded as Whiskerman's finest work. The new Deluxe Edition features 3 unreleased bonus tracks from the original album sessions.

JEREMY TUPLIN
ORVILLE'S DISCOTEQUE
TRAPPED ANIMAL LP
A full on, unashamed concept album! Packed with dark, twisted indie electro hits. "Tuplin belongs in the lineage of arch dramatists like Tindersticks and The National" Uncut. "Bill Callahan on 'shrooms" LOBF.

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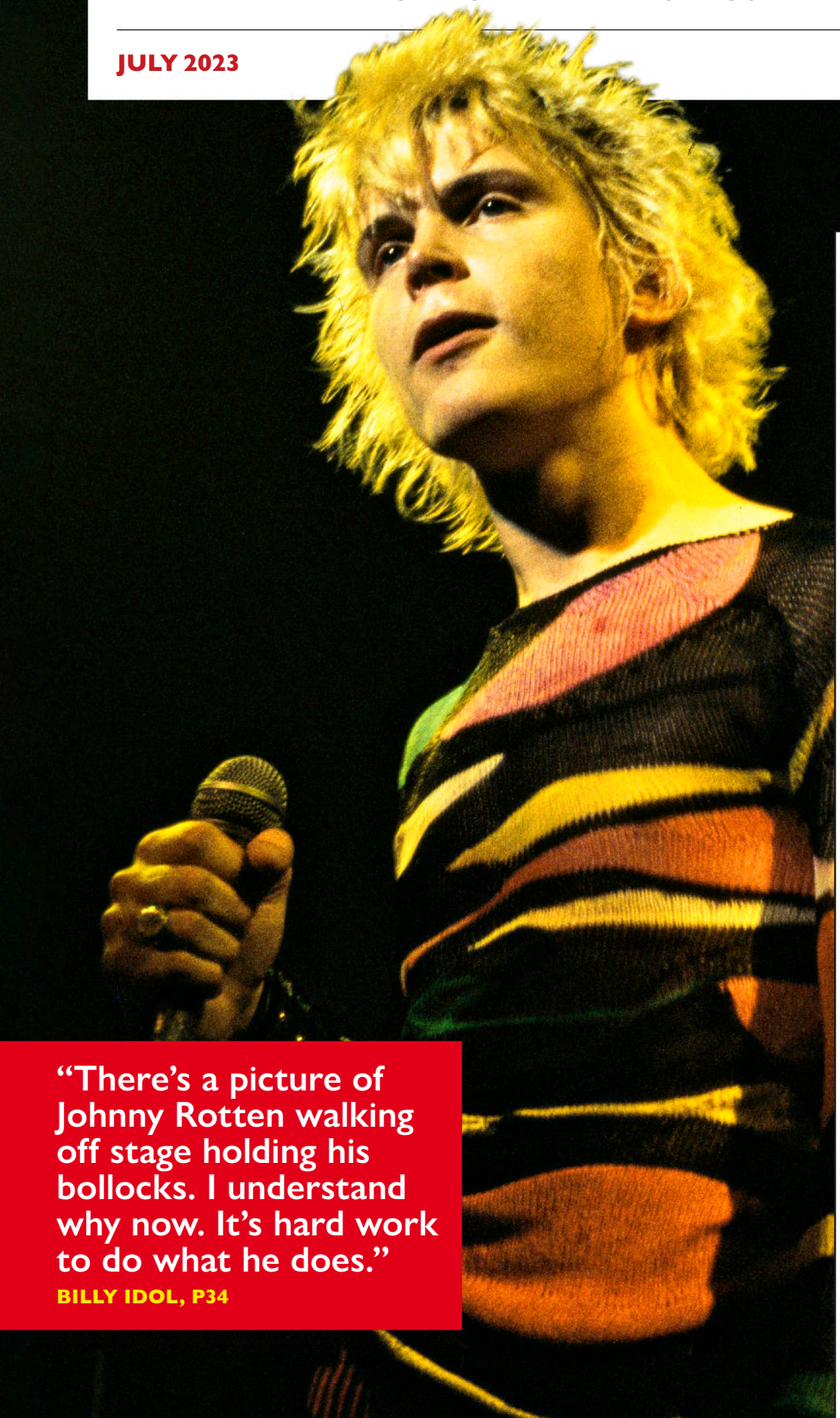

"There's a picture of Johnny Rotten walking off stage holding his bollocks. I understand why now. It's hard work to do what he does."

BILLY IDOL, P34

FEATURES

28 COLIN BLUNSTONE The choirboy pipes of The Zombies and solo gems on a lifetime of taking the unconventional route: "Nothing The Zombies have done has been simple or traditional."

34 GENERATION SEX Steve Jones, Paul Cook, Billy Idol, Tony James: punk supergroup as motley crew. Thankfully, there'll be no Friggin' In The Riggin': "That's pantomime territory."

40 WITCH Zambia's 'Zamrock' pioneers reboot in the 2020s, and look back on the turmoil and tragedy, poverty and violence that surrounded their psychedelic uprising.

44 NICK DRAKE From new interviews, Richard Morton Jack identifies the music that made Drake who and what he was, and the moments his talent took giant steps.

52 THE TEARDROP EXPLODES In their post-punk pomp they supported Queen and beat Paul McCartney at pool, but Julian Cope and band burnt bright and fast, culminating in a "disastrous wake".

56 LOVE The band's last surviving member, Johnny Echols, keeps their legacy alive, mourns Arthur Lee anew, and clears the fog of fiction that obscures their true story.

62 WILLY DEVILLE From New England to New York to New Orleans, Willy DeVille lived the street soul of rock'n'roll. High time he was recognised, says Sylvie Simmons.

COVER STORY

68 JONI MITCHELL Joni's genre-trashing genius shines in the story of *Court And Spark*, told by the people who made it. Plus: her on-stage exploits fêted in the run up to her big June show, and the story of her rehab by Rufus Wainwright.

Gus Stewart/Getty

We are the robots: Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories* rebooted, Reissues, p101.

MOJO

REGULARS

9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE Sunny War, Black Key Patrick Carney and Baxter Dury play you their songs for every occasion.

112 REAL GONE Harry Belafonte, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Mark Stewart, Ahmad Jamal, Jah Shaka, Seymour Stein and more – goodnight.

120 ASK MOJO Which group was the first to have its own logo?

122 HELLO GOODBYE They formed at college and he left shortly before they became Queen. Tim Staffell remembers his time in Smile.

WHAT GOES ON!

14 MADE IN CHICAGO There's a new Windy City Blues doc coming which traces how Muddy, Wolf and the rest were osmosed by Butterfield, Bloomfield and other white youths looking for kicks.

16 GANG OF FOUR After Andy Gill's death in 2020, it seemed like the influential Leeds post-punkers were done. But now crucial ex-members Jon King and Hugo Burnham have reunited and tell us how it happened.

18 SPARKS On the eve of new LP *The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte*, Ron and Russell talk about artistic endurance, the world turning their way again, and revenge as a dish best enjoyed cold.

19 DAMIEN Mimi Parker's passing last year marked the end of Low. Now her partner Alan Sparhawk has a new, different group. "I'm learning not to be surprised by anything," he says.

20 JOE McALINDEN He was the singer/songwriter in '90s Glasgow power-poppers Superstar. Now he's overcome some serious challenges to finally emerge under his own name – "clunky as it is," he quips.

MOJO FILTER

80 NEW ALBUMS The gospel according to Paul Simon, plus Fatoumata Diawara, Noel Gallagher, Bobby Lee and more.

94 REISSUES Calexico break new ground, plus Yusef Lateef, Bob Dylan, The Lemonheads, old-school hip-hop, Meiko Kaji and more.

106 BOOKS Inside Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska*, plus the dark tale of goth and more.

110 SCREEN The truth about US rock group Blood, Sweat & Tears' rise and fall.

Sparks spill the beans in Confidential, p18.

Holy smoke!: Paul Simon has made a masterpiece, Lead Album, p80.

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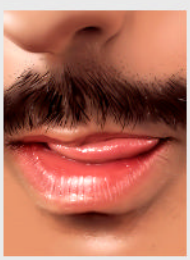
THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Richard Morton Jack

Richard writes about Nick Drake's musical and literary influences in this issue. His biography of Drake is published by John Murray this month. He is now working on an overview of '60s/70s British jazz, out this autumn, and on elvinyl.com, the music marketplace and archive he co-founded in 2020.

Sylvie Simmons

Sylvie has been contributing to MOJO since our first issue. Since then she's written a bunch of books – including Leonard Cohen's biography and Debbie Harry's memoir – and released two acclaimed LPs as a singer-songwriter and ukulele player. This month she recalls an encounter with Willy DeVille (see p62).



arnO

arnO is an illustrator based on the French Riviera. Inspired by the magical light that surrounds him, he creates impossibly smooth and glossy pictures. Slippery when wet, his very distinctive style is glamorous, witty and vibrant – pushing perfection to its natural limits. The rest of the time, arnO works on his tan (SPF50+).

Munachi-Osegbu, arnO

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MOJO PRESENTS

Ramblers & Gamblers

15 KEY VOICES FOR 2023

LANKUM, ANGEL BAT DAWID, LISA O'NEILL, CASSANDRA JENKINS, JANA HORN, ANGELINE MORRISON, JULIE BYRNE & MORE

1 SBT

13th St. #2

Sarabeth Tucek's return to action as SBT, 11 years after her last album, is one of the low-key musical events of 2023 thus far. On this highlight of her *Joan Of All* LP, the former Bill Callahan collaborator hymns her old New York neighbourhood – and, implicitly, Patti Smith and the Velvets too.

Written by Sarabeth Tucek. Published by Darkthing Music, ASCAP and ©2022. From double A-side single The Gift/13th St. #2 (Ocean Omen) & also an alternate version of a track from the double LP *Joan Of All* (Ocean Omen)

2 MEG BAIRD

Cross Bay

Meg Baird has been perfecting her filigreed take on acid-folk since singing with Espers in the early 2000s (you might also recognise her from heavier psych types Heron Oblivion). Cross Bay comes from her fourth solo LP, and showcases her exceptional fingerpicking as well as that uncanny, ethereal voice; Trees would be a decent UK folk rock reference.

Written by Meg Baird. Published by 2022 Margaret Baird (BMI) Produced by Meg Baird & Charlie Saufley. ℗&©2022 Drag City Inc. From *Furling* (Drag City)

3 SAM BURTON

Maria

If Meg Baird's aesthetic is classic minimalism, LA resident Sam Burton errs towards the maximal – towards baroque, string-laden chamber-pop, like a young Jimmy Webb produced by Jonathan Wilson. "To me," he told MOJO recently, "it feels like holding hands with the past and acknowledging it. It's about having a kinship but trying to make it personal."

Written by Sam Burton. Published by Ribbon Music (ASCAP) adm. 2023 Partisan Records. ℗ &©2023 Partisan Records. From *Dear Departed* (Partisan Records); https://partisanrecords.com

4 JIM GHEDI

What Will Become Of England

Our first trad song was found by Ghedi in the Alan Lomax Archives, sung by Norfolk farmworker Harry Cox in 1953. Sheffield-based Ghedi finds apocalyptic contemporary resonance, giving its indictment of working-class poverty a folk-industrial intensity akin to Lankum. Ghedi's new album of guitar duets with Toby Hay is reviewed on p89.

Written by Jim Ghedi. ℗&©Jim Ghedi 2022. Available via Bandcamp - https://jimghedi.bandcamp.com/track/what-will-become-of-england

9 ANGELICA ROCKNE

Protection, Prayers And Vigilance

A new name to most, Angelica Rockne is a country singer from northern California with a touch of Emmylou Harris to her stately trill. Protection, Prayers And Vigilance comes from her second LP, *The Rose Society*, and pits her against a stunned electric guitar to conjure a kind of stealthily psychedelic Americana. File next to Margo Price.

Written by Angelica Rockne. Copyright control. ℗ &©2023 Loose Music under exclusive license from Angelica Rockne. From *The Rose Society*. Picture by Kory Thibeault

10 KARA JACKSON

Dickhead Blues

A folk-soul showstopper from Chicago's former National Youth Poet Laureate. Jackson falls very roughly between Joanna Newsom and Lauryn Hill: "I am pretty top notch," she notes, accurately.

Written by Jackson, Castillo, Ogbannaya, Morimoto. Executive Produced by Kara Jackson, KAINA, Nnamdi, Sen Morimoto. Produced by Kara Jackson, KAINA, Nnamdi, Sen Morimoto. Published by Kara Jackson (Kara Jackson, ASCAP), Kaina Castillo (Terrorbird Publishing, BMI), Nnamdï Ogbannaya (Secretly Publishing, BMI) Sen Morimoto (Terrorbird Publishing, BMI); September Recordings Ltd. ℗ &©2023. From *Why Does The Earth Give Us People To Love?* (September Recordings)

11 LANKUM

Netta Perseus

"Simon & Garfunkel with night terrors," was how Jim Wirth described Netta Perseus in MOJO 353, and went on to call Lankum's *False Lankum* "modern folk music's own *OK Computer*". A striking claim, but the Dublin band's fourth LP betrays rare, genre-transcending ambition to match our hype.

Written by Cormac Demody, Ian Lynch, Radie Peat, John Murphy, Daragh Lynch. ℗2023 Lankum under exclusive licence to Rough Trade Records Limited. Published by Beggars Music. ISRC no. GB-CVZ-22-00432. Licensed courtesy of Rough Trade Records Limited. By arrangement with Beggars Group Media Limited. www.roughtraderecords.com

12 JANA HORN

The Dream

Last summer, Texan Horn promised MOJO her second album would be influenced by The Fall. "The radio broke in my car," she said, "so I listened to *50,000 Fall Fans Can't Be Wrong* over and over again." That isn't immediately obvious on The Dream, but her precise, unmediated sound has as much post-punk sinew as folk reverie. Aldous Harding fans take note.

Written by Jana Horn. Music Publisher: Jana Horn (ASCAP) administered by Domino Publishing Company. Producer: Jana Horn. ℗&©2023 No Quarter Records. From *The Window Is The Dream* (No Quarter)

Ebru Yildiz, Wyndham Boylan-Garnett, Nick Duffy, Tonje Thilesen, Sorcha Frances Ryder

DISCUSSING THEIR new album in MOJO recently, Lankum's Ian Lynch got onto the thorny business of traditional music – a subject that often dogs artists who work in the vicinity of folk. "I don't think there's purity in the tradition," he told us, "it's always been in flux. We're doing what people have always done, absorbing things and playing them in a way that makes musical sense to us."

If there's a guiding principle underpinning this latest MOJO compilation CD, Lynch's assertion works as well as any. *Ramblers & Gamblers* takes our cover star Joni Mitchell – and the lyrics of Help Me – as its inspiration, but these 15 artists rarely sound much like Joni. Rather, they're songwriters, like her, and interpreters of historic songs, who are comfortable evolving and expanding rather than destroying a musical continuum. These fine singers and writers range across British, Irish and North American folk traditions. They touch on country, and jazz, and rock. And always, there's a sense of musical legacies being respected, but never deferred to – a multi-faceted culture that remains ripe for reinvention by the new pioneer class of 2023.

5 ANGELINE MORRISON

Unknown African Boy (d.1830)

As Morrison tells us on page 22, Unknown African Boy is consciously designed to sound old, as it takes the true story of a Cornish shipwreck and casts it in a traditional idiom: "With folk, the stories you find are often stories that represent the under-represented. That's where we should be able to go to find the stories of this historic black presence."

Written by Angeline Morrison, Eliza Carthy. Lyrics by Angeline Morrison. ISRC: GB46W2200001. Topic Music Limited. Proper Music Publishing Limited

6 LISA O'NEILL

If I Was A Painter

Best known for her version of Dylan's All The Tired Horses on Peaky Blinders, O'Neill is part of the uncompromising, experimental Irish scene spearheaded by Lankum. "I think all music is folk," she told MOJO 354. "If anything has a story in it and mirrors society, it's folk."

Written by Lisa O'Neill. ℗2023 Lisa O'Neill under exclusive licence to Rough Trade Records Limited. Published by Domino Publishing. ISRC no. GB-CVZ-22-00455. Licensed courtesy of Rough Trade Records Limited. By arrangement with Beggars Group Media Limited. www.roughtraderecords.com

7 JULIE BYRNE

The Greater Wings

Another longtime MOJO favourite, back after an extended hiatus, is Byrne, whose last album, *Not Even Happiness*, ranked high in MOJO's best albums of 2017. Byrne's third album is due in July; here's the title track, her pure, calm voice and guitar placed in a delicately vast new soundscape.

Written by Julie Marie Byrne, Trayer Tryon de la Torre. Published by Mute Song Limited, Mortality Projects, ℗&©2023 Ghostly International. From *The Greater Wings* (Ghostly International) https://ghostly.com. Picture by Tonje Thilesen

8 ANGEL BAT DAWID

We Are Starzz

One of the leading lights of the Chicago jazz renaissance, Angel Bat Dawid's music often tends towards the grand and ecstatic: see her new *Requiem For Jazz*, reviewed in MOJO 355. This 2019 version of We Are Starzz, however, shows the clarinet-toting multi-instrumentalist's spiritual jazz invocations work just as well on an intimate scale.

Written by Angel Bat Dawid. Published by Intergalactic Mantra Works ASCAP. From *The Oracle*. ℗&©2019 International Anthem LLC; https://www.intlanthem.com/

13 CASSANDRA JENKINS

New Bikini

A former editorial assistant at The New Yorker, Jenkins was due to tour with the Purple Mountains before David Berman died in 2019. Berman's passing, and its aftermath, is addressed in this gorgeous, jazz-flecked torch song from 2021's *An Overview On Phenomenal Nature*. In Norway, she's advised, "Baby, jump in the ocean/The water it cures everything."

Written by Cassandra Jenkins. Published by BMI. ℗&©2021 Ba Da Bing. From *An Overview On Phenomenal Nature* (Ba Da Bing); http://www.badabingrecords.com/

14 SUNNY WAR

Sweet Nothing

The Nashville singer's been operating under the radar for a while now, but her exceptional seventh album, *Anarchist Gospel*, is a significant breakthrough. With a musical range and social commitment that echoes Hurray For The Riff Raff, and guests including Jim James and David Rawlings, it's one of 2023's best so far – "An exercise in building hope out of chaos," we noted in MOJO 352.

Written by Sunny War. Published by Sunny War Music (BMI). ℗&©2023 New West Records, LLC. From *Anarchist Gospel* (New West Records) www.newwestrecords.com

15 MYRIAM GENDRON

Poor Girl Blues

If part of this twilit folk song sounds familiar, it's the same 19th century French-Canadian standard, Un Canadien Errant, performed by Leonard Cohen on *Recent Songs*. Gendron is Canadian too, but her treatment is radically different, folding it into the ancient folk blues song Poor Boy Blues. From Gendron's 2021 rethink of tradition, *Ma Délire – Songs Of Love, Lost & Found*.

Written by Myriam Gendron. ©2021 Myriam Gendron. From *Ma Délire - Songs Of Love, Lost & Found* (Feeding Tube Records, Les Albums Claus); https://myriamgendron.bandcamp.com. Picture by Colin Medley

Rachael Cassells, Alejandro Ayala, Paula Bulwinkel, Joshua Black Wilkins

"WE'RE BREAKING SOME NEW GROUND HERE!"

JONI MITCHELL'S MUSICAL QUEST

TURN TO PAGE 68

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Sunny War

GOSPEL ANARCHIST

What music are you currently grooving to?

The new **JPEGMAFIA & Danny Brown** LP, *Scaring The Hoes*. Danny Brown's really good at saying really mean things in a really clever way, and the production is really out there.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Innervisions by **Stevie Wonder**. As traditional songwriting, and still technically doing pop music, I feel like he's the greatest of all time.

What was the first record you bought, and where did you buy it?

Sing Sing Death House by **The Distillers**, I got it at Amoeba Records in Hollywood. I was like 11 or 12. I was also going through all my stepdad's CDs.

Which musician other than yourself have you ever wanted to be?

Probably **Nina Simone**, musically and as an activist. All the bad stuff that she had going on, I can relate to. I think she really represents duality, balancing art and struggle in art.

What do you sing in the shower?

New York Dolls, Lonely Planet Boy. Makes me think of every relationship ever! That was when China White was still popping – you can't really find that quality any more, of heroin.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

If I was free and at home, *Military Affairs Neurotic* by **G.I.S.M.** Shreddy Japanese hardcore – that to me is relaxing music. For people that are manic, it almost makes you slow down. If something's more relaxing, it gives me too much room in my head to think about shit. I'm trying to use music to zone out. I like really obnoxious hip-hop for the same reason.

And your Sunday morning?

Screamers' Demo Hollywood 1977 EP. That actually is really mellow, I could put that on if I was hungover.

Sunny War's Anarchist Gospel is out now on New West.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Pat Carney

BLACK KEYS BEAT

What music are you currently grooving to?

Dan [Auerbach] and I have been DJing a lot. I've never bought more physical records than I have recently – a lot of rare punk 45s, **Killing Joke**, **PiL**, some **Damned**. I bought **Charles Sheffield**'s [1961 R&B track] It's Your Voodoo Working which I'd never heard before.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Television's *Marquee Moon* is up there, **Captain Beefheart**'s *Safe As Milk* is up there, *Nevermind*, *Led Zeppelin II*, *The White Album*… I can't whittle it down, it would be 20 records and tomorrow I'd disagree with half of them.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Ice Ice Baby by **Vanilla Ice**. We were in Columbus, Ohio, and on the drive home I put it in the stereo. My dad was like, "This is absolute trash…" Right there he took it upon himself to start righting the ship, and a couple of months later he bought me *Freak Out!* by **The Mothers Of Invention**.

What do you sing in the shower?

(Carney is getting back to us.)

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Seeing **Nirvana** and **The Smashing Pumpkins** on Saturday Night Live, I thought they were really cool. But seeing **The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion** and watching **Russell Simins** play drums was the first time I'd really paid attention to the fact that drums actually existed. He was incredibly talented but really understated too.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

If I want a dance record I'd stick on **The Mohawks**' The Champ, something like that. Or I'm Alive by **Johnny Thunder**, the intro to that is just fucking insane.

And your Sunday morning record?

Probably **The Velvet Underground**'s first record. On my Sunday mornings I usually end up lying in bed watching music videos with my son, so lately it's just been whatever he's into – recently it's **Gorillaz**, which isn't really Sunday morning music.

The Black Keys play the UK and Europe in June.

Joshua Black Wilkins, Jim Herrington

Baxter Dury

LOUNGE LIZARD LYRICIST

What music are you currently grooving to?

Hip-hop, old and new, from the **Wu-Tang Clan** to **Puff Daddy**, **Biggie Smalls** and then newer stuff like **Kendrick Lamar**. I've got really back into it.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

There's A Riot Goin' On by **Sly And The Family Stone**. It was my all-time favourite by the time I was 15. I like how it's utterly muso and horribly over the top and very political. There's a lot of angel dust so they suddenly become hyper-aware of themselves.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Green Door by **Shakin' Stevens**, from WH Smiths in Tring. I was 10. My dad was horrified. It was a horrific recreation of something that dad would have loved. There's a picture of me in a Shakin' Stevens T-shirt somewhere. Trying to find my identity through Shakey.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

> "I want to be effortless and beautiful like Frank Ocean."
> **BAXTER DURY**

Frank Ocean. I want to be effortless and beautiful like him. If you're that good, you can afford to be shy. I like his reluctance.

What do you sing in the shower?

Time After Time by **Cyndi Lauper**. I always get the first bit wrong and mumble it, then go for the chorus.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I was DJing in Paris a while ago and I really wanted to play Another Brick In The Wall by **Pink Floyd**. They were saying, "It will never work," but I insisted, and the whole place went mental. It was a huge success.

And your Sunday morning record?

What's Going On by **Marvin Gaye**. Making music, it can sometimes ruin it a bit for me, so after making an album I sometimes abstain from it because my relationship with it has gone a bit funny, but he is just the best.

Baxter Dury's I Thought I Was Better Than You is out on Heavenly on June 2.

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THERE'S A NICE STORY THE GUITARIST

Blake Mills shared with MOJO last year. On a Thursday in July, just before the Newport Folk Festival, he received a text confirming the miracle gig he'd been booked for. "We get a picture of them all buckled up on a plane, including Joni," Mills remembered. "I thought, Oh my god, this is actually happening."

What happened is now part of musical history: Joni Mitchell's return to the stage, on a golden throne, at the heart of Newport 2022's Joni Jam. A communal celebration of single-minded genius, it's been preserved as a forthcoming live album, and is about to be reprised on June 10 at the Gorge Amphitheatre in Washington State. Nearly 30,000 people will be at the Gorge show, but the Joni Jams began on a much smaller scale after her 2015 aneurysm, as illustrious visitors to Mitchell's Bel Air mansion joined in on musical rehab sessions.

Perhaps, too, these star-studded Joni Jams effectively started much earlier. This month in MOJO, Tom Doyle tracks Mitchell's path from confessional folk intimacy to the widescreen jazz-pop masterpiece of *Court And Spark*. Along the way there are walk-on parts for Hollywood royalty, epic studio workouts with Tom Scott's L.A. Express, and Mitchell's constant imperative to share her music with her peers. John Lennon tells her "It's all a product of overeducation". Dylan, meanwhile, falls asleep. "I think Bobby was just being cute," she said of her old friend; maybe he could show up at the Gorge to make amends?

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

Is it heavy stuff, man? Will it blow me away?

That was a fabulous Bowie 1973 article in MOJO 354. It took me right back 50 years to when I got into Bowie. I was one of a bunch of 12-year-olds at my prep school, Drumley House in Ayrshire, who bought glam rock singles and occasionally albums and played them on the school record-player. I was a Slade, T.Rex and Sweet fan at the time and taped the chart rundown on Radio 1. In summer 1973 there was a student teacher who I got to know and this kind young lad, who was probably only six or so years older, lent me some of his albums. I was given *Aladdin Sane*, *Led Zeppelin IV*, John Lennon's *Imagine* and taped what I then considered the best tracks onto my Philips cassette recorder.

Aladdin Sane was probably my favourite of the three records, and I have great memories each time I hear it, especially the title track, with Mike Garson's unique piano playing. I have sometimes described the piano solo as sounding like it is played by Vishnu on speed. So many fingers on the keyboard everywhere at an incredible rate. I've still never heard anything else like it, and the way he plays it over Trevor Bolder's repetitive bass line is hypnotic.

Later that year I got *Pin Ups* by Bowie and was introduced to See Emily Play, which would send me on a lifetime's obsession with Syd Barrett and Pink Floyd. So if there is a retired school teacher in his late sixties reading this who was at Drumley House in summer 1973, I am very grateful to you! You've got a lot to answer for, but I'm sorry that I can't remember your name…

Angus Self, Edinburgh

Keep on knocking, but you can't come in!

I was one of the lucky few at the Marquee Club in October 1973 for Bowie's 1980 Floor Show. It was supposed to be for fanclub members only, but I ➢

≺ just turned up and walked straight in. It was an amazing experience, very informal – I managed to chat to Mick Ronson and Angie Bowie. Everyone was completely blown away with the brilliant new (then unrecorded) 1984, complete with Dodo, left off *Diamond Dogs*. And there was a great I Got You Babe with Marianne Faithfull, who was wearing a backless nun's outfit. It's crazy it's never been released in the UK. The recent (although very good) Moonage Daydream was crying out for some of this footage.

David Lynch, via e-mail

You better fasten your seatbelt, man

Martin Aston's article on The Blue Aeroplanes [MOJO 354] was good to read. Three albums were recommended: *Swagger*, *Tolerance* and *Welcome, Stranger!* – all good. But after a discussion, me and my friends do believe that MOJO should appear in court to answer the criminal charge: why is it that *Beatsongs* is left out? Time and time again this album – their best – is neglected.

Chaz, via e-mail

…Thanks for the short article on The Blue Aeroplanes. Velvets twinned with The Byrds. I may have been in the band, I'm not sure…

Nick, via e-mail

Sweetheart, I'll talk to him

Thanks for your heartwarming article on Alan Hull [MOJO 354]. About five months before Alan's untimely passing, I saw him at the Grove folk club in Wakefield. He'd clearly had a couple of jars, but I recall the chat I had with him: He called me a "Yorkshire Pudding", which made me laugh. It was his humanity and acute sense of the beauty of life. His song on the B-side of Lady Eleanor was Nothing But The Marvellous Is Beautiful – that was a crib from the French Surrealist movement. He was a very bright and incisive guy, down to earth but with a huge spiritual depth. I'm just digging out his book of poetry, The Mocking Horse, which I bought all those years ago. And I always thought that *Dingly Dell* was an undervalued album. The title track is very mystical, and All Fall Down was a poignant song. The single version had a picture of the notorious Centre Point London office block on the cover. The two sides of Alan Hull – the mystic and the militant. A Northern genius, yes.

John Roberts, Wakefield

It's punk rock, man! We can do that! We can be punks, man!

It may not have escaped your notice that there's something of a goth 'moment' going on, with books about seminal nightclub The Batcave, John Robb's tome about goth, that prom scene from the Netflix show Wednesday, etc. My question to you is: where are the features on the bands of some spectral stature, some of whom are pretty active this year? Killing Joke, Nick Cave and The Cure get plenty of respect and occasional coverage, but what about Bauhaus, Siouxsie, The Mission, The Sisters Of Mercy and the dear departed Cramps? I'm not looking for some overview of the goth scene feature with all the also-rans and current scene bands, but articles treating the movement's principal founders as you do other artists; exploring the music, the creation of the albums, their influences (remember all those Sisters covers like Jolene, Gimme Shelter and Knocking On Heaven's Door?) and their legacies – maybe some unexpected.

I've not got a real dog in this fight by the way – I've not listened to most of this music for years, except The Cramps. But I would be intrigued by some credible journalistic perspectives on these graveyard movers and shakers from the '80s.

Branwell Johnson, via e-mail

Check it out, man, it'll boogie woogie on your mind

It was a pleasure to read the sidebar on Luther Russell within the Jody Stephens/Big Star article [MOJO 354]. With his backstory and current work with Those Pretty Wrongs and SBT, he's deserving of a more in-depth look. If nothing else, his superb 2007 LP *Repair* (produced by Ethan Johns) is ripe for revisiting in the Buried Treasure section. Just sayin'.

Steve Acri, Pittsburgh

Yeah, my dog ate my stash, man

Many thanks for the A Certain Ratio article [MOJO 354]. Many good tracks have been duly downloaded, and my wife and I can recommend a combo of 10mg gummies and the Tony Allen samples in Afro Dizzy.

Randy Keller, Toronto

…I nearly fell off my seat and spat out my tea as I went through your latest issue. Yes, it was full of the usual in-depth articles one expects, but then a proper article about A Certain Ratio! Over the years, I've read about artists in MOJO that led me on a journey of discovery, so I hope your readers look into the back catalogue of one of the most underrated bands of post-punk. I managed after 40 years to finally see them live and they were phenomenal.

Andrew Rana, Leicester

The freak with the top hat is leaving with the basketball…

Can any MOJO readers assist? I am trying to locate a photo of a '60s band – The Saints And Sinners. They played regularly at Crowstone Church Hall, Westcliffe-On-Sea. Someone must have a photo. Any help much appreciated.

Richard Hemmings, via e-mail

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NEW★WEST

WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO

For The Black, White And Blues

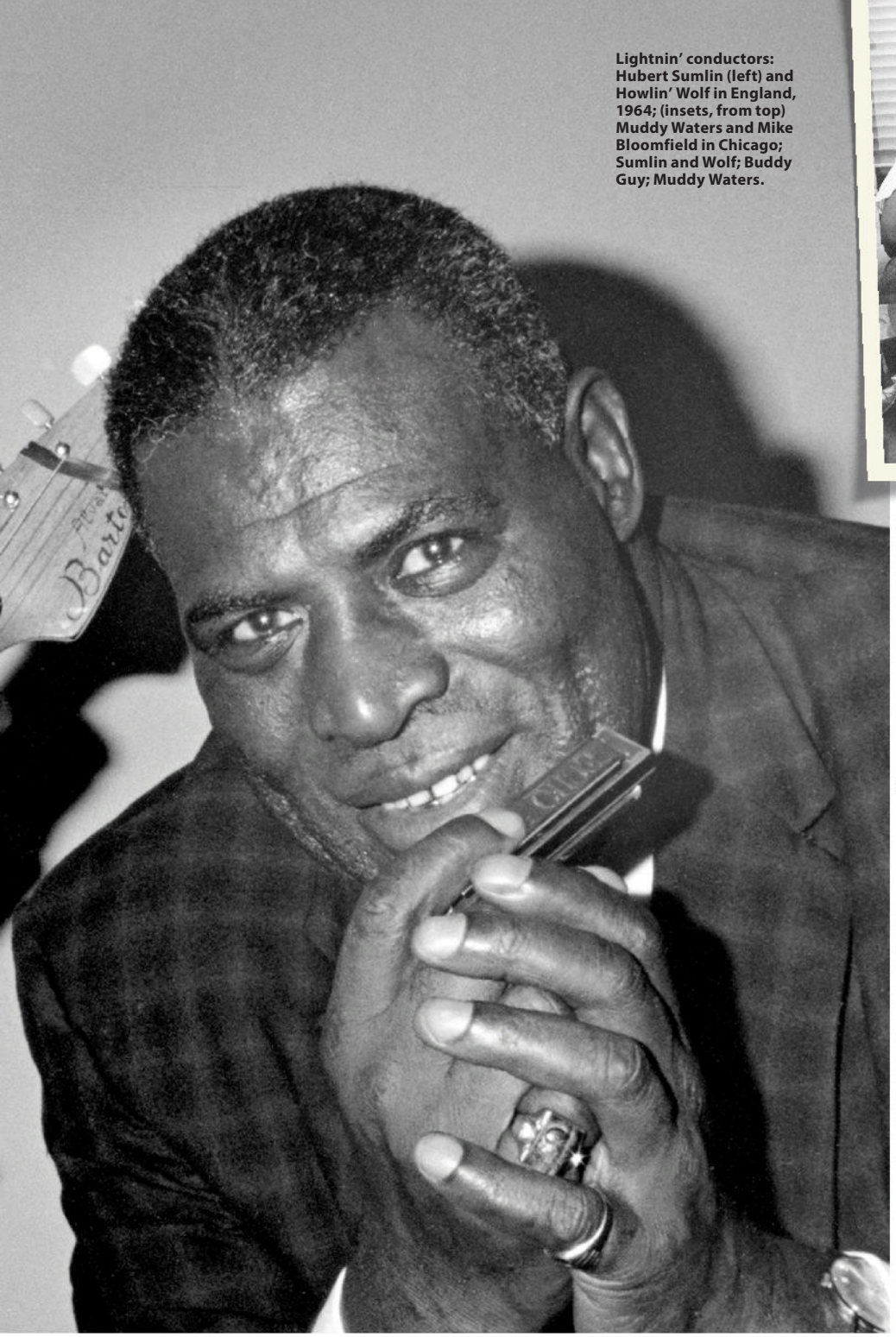
New doc Born In Chicago salutes the city's titanic music legacy, with help from original masters, their apprentices and Dan Aykroyd.

Brian Smith/Cache Agency, Ray Flerlage/Cache Agency (3)

"THE EARLY Paul Butterfield and Charlie Musselwhite albums didn't sell a million copies, but it was like the old Velvet Underground line: everyone who bought a copy started a blues band," says Bob Sarles, co-director with John Anderson of big-hearted documentary Born In Chicago, a cinematic love letter that's taken over a decade to complete.

The film chronicles the passing of the torch from the original black Chicago bluesmen, who'd brought the rural music from Mississippi, to the younger white kids who learned to play it and thrill peers to its raw, dynamic beauty. This process is explained in interviews both archival and new with the fathers (Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King, Buddy Guy) and sons (from Musselwhite, Mike Bloomfield, Paul Butterfield, Barry Goldberg and Elvin Bishop to Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Al Kooper and Steve Miller). Vintage music, footage and images include drummer Sam Lay's home movies of musicians at party time and a remarkable group portrait of Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, Sleepy John Estes, Sonny Boy Williamson II, Sunnyland Slim, Sugar Pie DeSanto, Lightnin' Hopkins and Hubert Sumlin, all blended with a scorching score by Goldberg and guitarist Jimmy Vivino. The story is mapped by ace historian Joel Selvin and narrated by Dan Aykroyd, AKA Elwood Blues, who helped bring Chicago's South Side to Hollywood in The Blues Brothers.

As the film shows, Chicago was a logical destination for black Americans escaping the racist South during The Great Migration of the early-mid 20th century, amplifying country blues to compete with the urban roar. As America entered the 1960s, young white Chicagoans like Bloomfield and Butterfield discovered live music at the open-air market on Maxwell Street and the funky bars dotting the city's South Side, like Pepper's Lounge and Silvio's – home to Muddy and Wolf respectively. A few began hanging at these



Lightnin' conductors: Hubert Sumlin (left) and Howlin' Wolf in England, 1964; (insets, from top) Muddy Waters and Mike Bloomfield in Chicago; Sumlin and Wolf; Buddy Guy; Muddy Waters.

joints and the musically adept sat in with their mentors. "It was like we were on a mission to learn the blues from the masters," recalls Goldberg. "And the crowd felt the passion we had for the music."

"Most white Americans got their blues from the British bands: The Rolling Stones, Yardbirds, Fleetwood Mac," notes Vivino. "This movie shows that cats like Bloomfield and Butterfield got it from the original black blues guys directly. It wasn't so much copied – it came from the same trenches in Chicago." Co-director Anderson adds: "These white boys shared an alienation and were allowed to grow by Wolf and Muddy. The deep bond between them is the beauty of the story."

The film also demonstrates how, eventually, the teachers received tuition. "When these kids got traction with their careers, they paid back the older guys by getting them gigs in the [white neighbourhood of the] North Side," explains Sarles, "at the psychedelic ballrooms and on the college circuit. As Elvin points out in the film, there was something that went beyond race, and it was the love of the music. It set an example for the rest of society that people of different races could work together for the common good."

Michael Simmons

"Most white Americans got their blues from the British bands."
JIMMY VIVINO

Born In Chicago is available on all major digital platforms from August 1.

Open wide: Gang Of Four (from left) Jon King, Sara Lee, Hugo Burnham and David Pajo, still "having fun".

GANG OF FOUR RETURN? KING AND BURNHAM EXPLAIN ALL

EVER SINCE bassist Dave Allen left Gang Of Four in 1980, Leeds' incendiary punk-funk agitators have endured stages of birth, death and rebirth. The saga continues with news of a UK tour in October 2023, having previously toured the US in March '22.

But this is not the Gang Of Four headed by guitarist Andy Gill since 2012, but his fellow founders Jon King (vocals) and Hugo Burnham (drums) taking back control after Gill's untimely death in 2020. They're joined by Sara Lee – Gang bassist from 1981 to 1984 – and guitarist David Pajo (Slint, Zwan, Interpol).

"Andy's are really big boots to fill," avers King. "But David is playing with great reverence and attention to detail. And since Dave [Allen] didn't want to tour, Sara was the obvious choice."

The catalyst for this incarnation was 2021's *77-81* box set, which followed a new US deal after Gang Of Four extricated themselves from their long-standing "crappy" Warner Bros contract; a bone of contention as Gill opposed the decision. By now, King and Gill, friends – "brothers, really" – since their teens and co-drivers of their 1976-1984, 1990-1995 and 2004-2012 eras, hadn't spoken for 10 years.

"Firstly," King insists, "I didn't leave as Andy said. I just told him we should stop. I wanted our next record [the follow-up to 2011's *Content*] to sound like a live band, rough and aggressive like our best stuff, but Andy wanted to do everything with Pro Tools and samples. To find he was playing with a pick-up band… Johnny Marr wouldn't go out as The Smiths as the only founder member. I told Andy, 'Go out as Andy Gill of Gang Of Four', but he refused. And he released three more albums as Gang Of Four. I was so pissed off… [this] is more legitimate because it's two founders, and Sara was there early on."

The fall-out meant that neither King nor Burnham attended Gill's funeral. "We didn't even know Andy was ill," says Burnham. "We were told, 'No one can stop you, but you know Andy doesn't want you to be there.'"

Gill's website claims that, "in 2019, Gang Of Four released their tenth and last ever studio album." It seems that probably won't be the case, as the new line-up are convening in King's hometown of Bath this summer, "to see what happens," he says. Adds Burnham, "It's 2023, so why not release one song, then another, and eventually put a collection to sell on the merch table."

King and Burnham deny that Gang Of Four 2023 is simply an act of reclamation. Says Burnham, "I love the songs and we play them ferociously well, despite our advanced years. And we're having fun."

"The US dates all sold out and the reaction was remarkable," adds King. "And two-thirds of the audience looked under 35. I was struck by how many told me how those early albums helped them deal with personal issues. The same anxieties we felt are still around – nuclear threat, sexism, racism. People still want bands that reflect that."

Martin Aston

> **"Johnny Marr wouldn't go out as The Smiths as the only founder member."**
> **JON KING**

Gang Of Four tour the UK from September 30. See ffm.bio/gangoffour for info.

GIMME FIVE... COVERS OF BLAKE'S JERUSALEM

Paul Robeson
Jerusalem
(RCA VICTOR, 1941)

Blake's 1804 poem of Christ visiting England with his uncle (possibly), recorded in sonorous style by the mighty voice and moral force after he'd returned to the US after living in Britain. Soon he was being denounced as a communist by the FBI.

Emerson, Lake & Palmer
Jerusalem
(FROM *BRAIN SALAD SURGERY*, MANTICORE, 1973)

You've got a freaky LP title and some tasty H.R. Giger cover art. So how to kick the album off? With a majestic rock version of Blake's opus, with Moog, of course. Released as a single, the BBC banned it. Squares!

The JAMs
Jerusalem On The Moors
(KLF COMMUNICATIONS, 1991)

A bonus from the It's Grim Up North Top 10 rave-litany of towns in Lancashire, Yorkshire etc. Here Hubert Parry's 1902 composition is remade as orchestral techno, with singing sheep and foghorns from dark satanic mills.

Faces
Jerusalem
(FROM *LONG PLAYER*, WARNER BROS, 1971)

A lilting solo Ronnie Wood slide guitar instrumental version flips the marching band 'alternative national anthem' narrative, and takes the song to headspaces more attuned to a Mississippi Delta backporch at sundown.

Mark Stewart And The Maffia
Jerusalem
(ON-U SOUND, 1982)

The departed Stewart hitches chariots of fire to heavy dub for spartans. Disorientating yet cognisant of deeper truths. For more punked-up misuse, see interpretations by The Fall, Test Dept and on Derek Jarman's Jubilee.

Jason Grow

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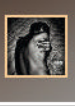

No flash in the pans: Sparks' (left) Russell and Ron Mael stay true to their creative vision.

FIRST CLASS MAEL

Ron and Russell's five sparkiest.

RON

1 **The Royal Teens** *Short Shorts* (ABC-PARAMOUNT SINGLE, 1958)

2 **John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman** *Lush Life* (FROM *JOHN COLTRANE AND JOHNNY HARTMAN*, IMPULSE!, 1963)

3 **The Velvet Underground** *Sister Ray* (FROM *WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT*, VERVE, 1968)

4 **John Adams** *News Has A Kind Of Mystery* (FROM *NIXON IN CHINA*, ELEKTRA NONESUCH, 1987)

5 **Marvin Gaye** *The Star-Spangled Banner* (FROM *THE MASTER, 1961-1984*, MOTOWN, 1995)

RUSSELL

1 **Fats Domino** *Whole Lotta Loving* (FROM *FATS DOMINO SWINGS*, IMPERIAL, 1959)

2 **J-Hope** *More* (FROM *JACK IN THE BOX*, BIG HIT, 2022)

3 **The Yardbirds** *Little Games* (FROM *LITTLE GAMES*, EPIC, 1967)

4 **NiziU** *Chopstick* (FROM *U*, EPIC, 2021)

5 **Chang Kiha** *Envy None* (FROM LEVITATION EP, DOOLO, 2022)

Sparks

Ron and Russell talk Cate Blanchett, creative obstinacy and wanting to be sued.

THEY'RE IN their sixth decade of making albums, but Ron Mael, 77, and his kid brother Russell, 74, are as, well, sparkling as they ever were. This month, the *sui generis* Los Angelenos play two nights at the Royal Albert Hall and, in July, headline the biggest venue of their career, the Hollywood Bowl. Their most recent albums, 2017's *Hippopotamus* and 2012's *A Steady Drip, Drip, Drip* returned them to the British Top 10 for the first time since 1975, while album number 26, the splendid *The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte*, is both quintessential Sparks and not quite like anything they've done before. "The important thing," explains Russell, "is that it's as compelling as something we did 20 albums ago."

Munachi Osegbu

Cate Blanchett's in the video to the new album title track…

Russell: She introduced herself at last year's César Awards in Paris and said she'd been a fan for ever. Our jaws dropped, we exchanged contact information and when it came to making a new video we thought, Cate'll bail us out. We sent her the song. She loved it, she came the next day, did exactly what she wanted and we winged it in the background. Three takes later, we sent her on her way.

Why is the girl crying in her latte?

Ron: You don't know what happened to provoke it and you don't know what's going to happen to the other people who come in and are crying in their lattes. If I were a pretentious person, I would say it encapsulates a certain melancholy of the times, but I'm not a pretentious person.

Why has the world turned Sparks' way again?

Russell: It's nothing to do with simply being around for so long. Edgar Wright's documentary, The Sparks Brothers, helped. So did our film Annette, but the important thing is that we've stayed true to our creative vision.

After Madonna, Jackie Kennedy, Morrissey, Edith Piaf, Charlie Parker, Igor Stravinsky etc, Veronica Lake is the latest icon who's become a Sparks song title. Any responses?

Ron: It's a too-overt attention-getting device. We would like somebody to take some kind of legal action against us. Unfortunately, they've ignored us.

When fantastic albums such as 1986's *Music That You Can Dance To* were getting no traction, did you feel like giving up?

Ron: It motivated us. Out of obstinacy, we had a 'fuck you, we're going to prove you wrong' attitude at the moments of complete rejection: 'we're gonna be in your face for a few more decades, so you'd better accept it.' On those days where we're not working, we gloat over the albums that have been re-assessed. The list is mounting year by year.

What happens when you disagree?

Russell: We agree in a global way. We have a common unspoken vision about what Sparks is and what we should be doing. We battle over specifics, but if it's the sound of a keyboard, or whether my voice should have 40 or 25 overdubs, those things are not important in the grand scheme of things. The only thing I can think of is When Do I Get To Sing 'My Way'. I loved the melody so much, but it was short-changed by the lyrics. Begrudgingly at first, Ron went away and came up with something that matched the melody's emotional side.

Ron: The irony is that the place where that song was popular was Germany, where nobody understood what it was about.

What's a good lesson you've learned?

Ron: We do everything ourselves now, but what we learned from being produced by Tony Visconti, Muff Winwood, Giorgio Moroder and Todd Rundgren is to be really cruel with material that doesn't stand up. We shed a lot of songs, mainly because they're not good enough. Quite a lot of people want to hear them but we're not going to give them the chance. People don't have to know what you did that isn't quite cool.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

Ron: We got so many compliments about Never Turn Your Back On Mother Earth being pro-environment and pro-ecology. It wasn't at all. It was never turn your back on Mother Earth, or it'll whack you.

As told to John Aizlewood

The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte is released on May 26 on Island.

> "We gloat over the Sparks albums that have been re-assessed."
> RON MAEL

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Jenny Lewis

The indie-rock showbiz vet salutes De La Soul's 3 Feet High And Rising (Tommy Boy, 1989).

I was 13, living in San Fernando Valley. I'd heard the Me Myself And I single, and I bought the cassette of *3 Feet High And Rising* the week it came out at the local Sam Goody on Van Nuys Boulevard.

Just from the opening bars, I was just in love with it. In my room I had a little pink tape player, and I'd listen to the cassette over and over and look at the artwork, and it completely changed me. It made me want to be a poet, and introduced me to so many artists through the samples. The first time I heard George Clinton, Steely Dan, The Animals, Johnny Cash, all of those moments came through this record. There's a French sample which prepped me for getting into Serge Gainsbourg years later! I learned a lot about jazz and R&B, it was colourful, it was sexual, it was just the perfect coming-of-age record – be yourself, be positive, listen to old records, don't conform. It was very rebellious, yet really positive. And there's a song on the record called Jenifa Taught Me, which was, of course, myself, so I found myself in the music as well.

It just felt so cool to be a part of the [De La philosophy] Daisy Age cult. I started wearing bell bottoms and daisies in my hair, I had a kind of slinky strut suddenly. I started recording on my pink boombox with a little Casio drum machine, writing verses and recording them. I feel like it kind of made me a hipster, like I'd found the music that was made for me at that age.

It's sad with the passing of Dave [AKA Trugoy, who passed away in February], but now people can finally hear De La Soul's records on streaming platforms, which they couldn't for years. I feel like two or three generations have missed out on growing up with De La Soul, which I was fortunate to do. It still sounds great. It's like the Proustian sniff test – put it on and you're 13 years old again.

As told to Ian Harrison

Joy'All is out on Blue Note/EMI on June 9.

INTRODUCING DAMIEN, ALAN SPARHAWK TALKS LIFE AFTER LOW

"DANCEABLE FOR a group of northern Minnesota folk," is how Damien – a band featuring Low's Alan Sparhawk on guitar, his son Cyrus on bass, Duluth musician Marc Gartman on vocals and songwriting duties and Owen Mahon on drums – wryly advertised a show last summer. "We're in dire need of dance here," explains Sparhawk from Duluth. "There's still snow on the ground. It's brutal here. And I mean, who doesn't secretly love the idea of invoking someone to dance?"

Named by Sparhawk after the title of their first The Omen-influenced single, Damien have coalesced over the past 18 months around the friendship between Sparhawk and Gartman. They first met when Gartman came to Minnesota to make 2004's Closer Than That, a documentary about Low, the band Sparhawk formed with his wife Mimi Parker in 1993. With the single and new 6-track album *The Boy Who Drew Cats*, Damien has become Sparhawk's most visible musical project since the devastating loss of Parker last November.

"I don't really have words to describe how obviously weird it is to not be with Mim," says Sparhawk. "I'm lucky, I've got a lot of people with me and they told me to just relax, you know, there's no obligation to do anything, and I think that's been pretty vital. Because there's definitely times where I kind of have a panic, that part of me going like, 'OK, what are you doing?' It's weird to be sort of going through the most intense thing I've experienced without having this really beautiful open channel I've always had."

That Damien was already functioning, however, made the idea of playing again less foreboding. "Having to start from scratch, trying to find a way into music, I think that would have been pretty discouraging," says Sparhawk. Gartman, he says, "will have concepts like, 'OK, we're going to make a record about these foxes that live on this island'. It's exciting to find your place in something you can see has already got some light in it."

With William Onyeabor, Ween and the "cool arpeggiating stuff" of Gartman's cheap Casio keyboard as presiding spirits, Damien are a noticeably different prospect to Low: the single comes with the disco-filtered echoes of Grandaddy or Bon Iver; *The Boy Who Drew Cats* is an electro-pop exploration of a rat-infested Japanese fairy tale. Gartman's favourite description of the music came from Cyrus's girlfriend: "It reminded her of Super Mario Brothers music. I love that." Throughout, though, the fable's moral is repeated to haunting effect: "Avoid large places/Stick to small".

Playing with friends and 18-year-old Cyrus – who learned bass during the pandemic – has allowed Sparhawk to stick to those small places for now. "It demands a little bit of different attention from my mind. I'm not singing, I'm not the frontperson."

While Damien are planning more live performances, Sparhawk also has some "little soft deadlines" pencilled in later this year in the form of shows he has been asked to open.

"I'm learning not to be surprised by anything," he says. "There is a weird process going on and I have to allow myself the possibility that I have no idea what I'm going to be by the end of this."

Victoria Segal

"Who doesn't secretly love the idea of invoking someone to dance?"
ALAN SPARHAWK

Damien's The Boy Who Drew Cats is out now via marcgartman.bandcamp.com

Bobbi Rich

Good omens: Damien (from left) Owen Mahon, Marc Gartman, Alan and Cyrus Sparhawk.

A 'star is reborn: (clockwise from above) Joe McAlinden in the late '90s; taking tea with Superstar in the early '90s; Joe today.

EX-SUPERSTAR MAINMAN JOE McALINDEN GOES IT ALONE

"EVERY FUCKER around here has a chainsaw," laughs Joe McAlinden. "Not me – I wouldn't trust myself." Chatting from his conservatory/home studio in woody, rural Argyll, the former mainstay of '90s Glasgow contenders Superstar says hooting owls also impinged upon the tracking of his comeback LP, *Where The Clouds Go Swimming*.

Emotive and introspective, with Cocteaus and Vangelis-like sound design sometimes replacing Superstar's fuzzed-up guitar jangle, the album follows an alarming period of memory loss, hand-to-eye coordination issues and writer's block. "There was talk of early-onset dementia, but that's since been ruled out," explains McAlinden. "There's an issue with receptors in my brain, but this record has been something really positive coming from a big personal challenge."

> "He said we'd be Number 1 in two weeks…"
> **JOE McALINDEN**

Courtesy Joe McAlinden

Born in Bellshill, McAlinden was in C86 scene band The Boy Hairdressers before they evolved, without him, into Teenage Fanclub. Classically trained, he arranged strings and brass on the Fannies' 1991 breakthrough *Bandwagonesque* before signing to Creation with his own band Superstar in 1992. Superstar's boldly titled debut *Greatest Hits Volume 1* smacked of Burt Bacharach as well as McAlinden's Scots indie peers; two years later, Big Star's Alex Chilton guested on Don't Wanna Die from their eponymous second album, and 1998 single Every Day I Fall Apart reached angsty, powerpop perfection. Before Superstar disbanded in 2000, novelist Alan Warner declared his fandom by quoting lyrics and writing McAlinden into his 1998 novel The Sopranos.

Less satisfyingly, McAlinden earned precisely zilch from Rod Stewart covering Superstar's eponymous song on his 1998 LP *When We Were The New Boys* ("How about that?" he observes laconically), and regrets Superstar not releasing their own single version sooner. "It was all over Radio 1 as an album track and Rob Dickens [chairman] at Warners wanted to sign us for that one song," he explains. "He said we'd be Number 1 in two weeks, but I was talked out of it."

HEY JOE

Three McAlinden Star turns.

Superstar
Palm Tree
(CAMP FABULOUS, 1998)

Glaswegian power-pop meets The Beach Boys on an indie treasure recently re-released with new Alan Warner sleevenotes and the unreleased Brighouse Brass Band version of And When The Morning Comes.

Superstar
Phat Dat
(CAMP FABULOUS, 2000)

Home to the extraordinary Every Second Hurts, McAlinden's quiet/loud portrait of the last five minutes of his godmother's life, and to Someone's Watching Over Me, inspired by Elgar's Nimrod.

Joe McAlinden
Where The Clouds Go Swimming
(STHQ, 2023)

Demonstrating a cinematic, Robin Guthrie-meets-Kraftwerk-like flair (Light), and largely informed by recent health issues and his rural surroundings, McAlinden's first LP in eight years dreams harder. "It feels very fresh, very new," he says.

Post Superstar, McAlinden made two Edwyn Collins-produced jangle-pop LPs under the moniker Linden. "Working with Edwyn was such a highlight," he says, "but this time I've played everything myself and decided to release under my full name, clunky as it is. I love the idea of reaching fresh ears."

McAlinden has watched the recent re-formation of pals The Soup Dragons (including former Superstar guitarist Jim McCulloch), and recent upheavals chez Teenage Fanclub, with interest. "I went to school with them, and some of my happiest memories are of strumming guitars with Norman [Blake] at his granny's house when we basically had fuck all," he says.

All being well, his re-emergence will involve gigs. "I've always fancied getting a really good musical director and just turning up to sing and not play an instrument," he smiles. "Don't worry, though – I won't be wearing a Bryan Ferry suit or anything."

James McNair

Where The Clouds Go Swimming is out on July 14 on STHQ.

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THE AIR THAT I BREATHE
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LONG COOL WOMAN (IN A BLACK DRESS)
CARRIE-ANNE
LOOK THROUGH ANY WINDOW

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SUNDAY 17 SEPTEMBER
BOURNEMOUTH
ROYAL & WINTER GATE
TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER
CHELTENHAM TOWN HALL
FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER
GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SATURDAY 23 SEPTEMBER
SAVE IT FOR THE HAGUE
SUNDAY 24 SEPTEMBER
HOLY HAYDOCK
FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER
SCARBOROUGH ST GEORGE HALL
SATURDAY 30 SEPTEMBER
SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
SUNDAY 01 OCTOBER
BILSTON LOWER

TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER
GUILDFORD G LIVE
FRIDAY 06 OCTOBER
READING HEXAGON
SATURDAY 07 OCTOBER
CARDIFF ST DAVIDS HALL
SUNDAY 08 OCTOBER
LLANDUDNO
ODEON THEATRE
TUESDAY 10 OCTOBER
LIVERPOOL
PHILHARMONIC HALL
FRIDAY 13 OCTOBER
STOKE ON TRENT VICTORIA HALL
SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER
WOLVERHAMPTON THE HALLS
TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER
YORK BARBICAN
ASSEMBLY HALL THEATRE

FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER
BATH FORUM
SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER
CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER
LLANDUDNO
ODEON THEATRE
SATURDAY 28 OCTOBER
FESTIVAL HOUSE, THEATRE
SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER
SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
FRIDAY 03 NOVEMBER
LEICESTER ASTLE
SATURDAY 04 NOVEMBER
SOUTHAMPTON GUILDHALL
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Mon	11	GLASGOW	Royal Concert Hall
Wed	13	CARDIFF	St David's Hall
Thu	14	IPSWICH	Regent Theatre
Sat	16	WOLVERHAMPTON	The Halls
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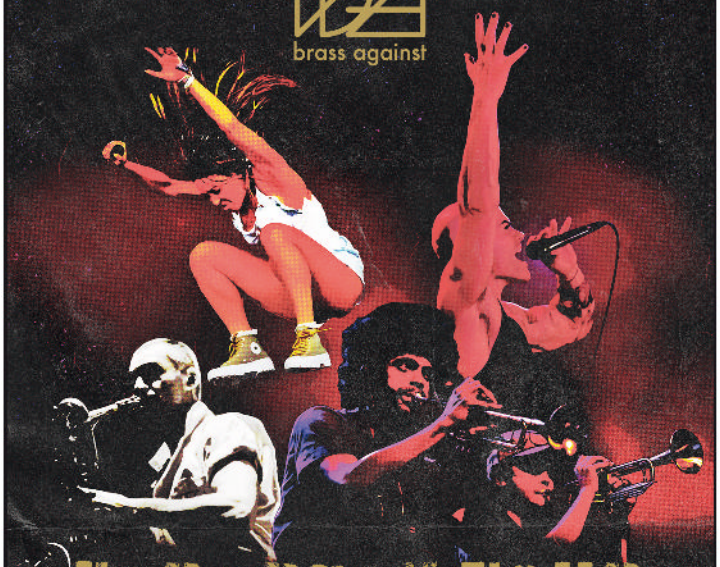

EUROPEAN TOUR

WHAT BETTER TIME THAN NOW

OCTOBER 2023

TUE	17	MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2	
FRI	20	LEEDS STYLUS	
SAT	21	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY2	
SUN	22	BRIGHTON CHALK	
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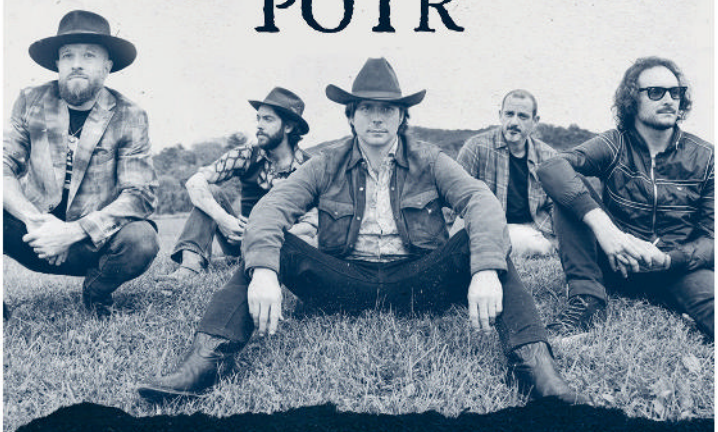

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OXFORD O2 ACADEMY

Wednesday 14th June
WOLVERHAMPTON
WULFRUN HALL AT THE HALLS

Thursday 15th June
LONDON
O2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN

Saturday 17th June
BRISTOL SWX

Monday 19th June
MANCHESTER
ACADEMY 2

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> "With folk, the stories that you find often represent the under-represented."
> **ANGELINE MORRISON**

Romancing the stones: Angeline Morrison integrates the darkness and the light.

Nick Duffy

THE HISTORIC ALCHEMY OF ANGELINE MORRISON, BRINGING BLACK BRITAIN'S UNTOLD STORIES TO TRAD FOLK

ANGELINE MORRISON knew she was on to something when, in the months before the release of her pioneering collection *The Sorrow Songs*, she sang Slave No More at her local folk club in Cornwall. "People joined in the chorus," she tells MOJO as she rests her back against the heater at home. "And afterwards somebody came up to me and said, 'What was that traditional song about the black man who's buried with his former master?' And I said, Well, I have to tell you that wasn't a traditional song."

One of the most feted 'folk' releases of the last decade, subtitled *Folk Songs Of The Black British Experience*, *The Sorrow Songs* is a masterful piece of wish-fulfilment, Morrison short-circuiting the folk process to tell the true stories of Britain's centuries-old black community in a superbly-weighted traditional idiom. "I wanted to make sure that the songs had a kind of sound-world that would resonate with the trad community," she explains. "With folk and with traditional songs, the stories that you find are often the stories that represent the under-represented. And I thought, Well, that's where we should be able to go to find the stories of this historic black presence."

Born in Birmingham, to a Jamaican mother and a father from the Outer Hebrides, Morrison found her path as a child when she accidentally heard Shirley Collins singing Our Captain Cried on the radio. "I'd never heard anything like it before," she says. "A wonderful, amazing world was conjured up that I couldn't really fathom."

As a teenager, she attended a local folk club, where she earned an early boost after a floor-singing spot ahead of a Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson show. "When I went to buy a record afterwards, Norma refused to let me pay for it," she remembers. "She said it's important to encourage the young singers. It felt like a blessing."

Produced by the couple's daughter Eliza Carthy (with Martin singing on Slave No More), *The Sorrow Songs*' success earned Morrison an appearance on Jools Holland's Later…, where she sang Unknown African Boy (d.1830) – a mother's lament based on the true story of a tiny body found aboard a Cornish shipwreck. However, while there are plenty more marginal stories of black Britons to be told, Morrison will not be telling them for now. Instead, she is working on a second LP with We Are Muffy – her psych-folk project with the Lilac Time's Nick Duffy – while her next solo album (provisional title: *The Luminous Dark*) will be something else entirely.

"I've been reading a lot about alchemy," she says. "I'm so compelled by that idea about the union of darkness and light and the fact that darkness and light are seen as opposing forces, but if you look at them sideways you can see that they need each other, and they're completely interdependent. As a way to live and as a way to move forward, integrating the darkness and the light can be really powerful."

Jim Wirth

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Lisa O'Neill, Anne Briggs, Nic Jones
- *The Sorrow Songs* was inspired by a chapter in W.E.B. Du Bois' study of African-American culture The Souls Of Black Folk, which focused on the music of "the enslaved people and their descendants". "We have a historic black presence in the UK, but what we don't have is this body of historic black songs."
- Morrison made her first recordings as a soul singer. "That was the main genre of music I grew up with," she says. "My mum really loved soul music: '70s soul, '60s soul. My love of soul is really equal to my love of traditional music."
- An occasional wyrd folker with We Are Muffy and Rowan: Morrison (note Wickerman reference), she was recently starstruck when she saw Vashti Bunyan backstage at a festival. "I ran out and said hello and told her how influential her music had been on me," she gushes. "It was like a visit from a deity."

KEY TRACKS

- Unknown African Boy (d.1830)
- Slave No More
- Mad-Haired Moll O'Bedlam

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Michaela Anne

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2023

31/5 GLASGOW, UK
Hug & Pint

1/6 OXFORD, UK
Jericho Tavern

2/6 POCKLINGTON, UK
Arts Centre

4/6 LONDON, UK
The Grace

6/6 BRIGHTON, UK
Mid Sussex Music Hall

9/6 STOCKHOLM, SE
Sthlm Americana

10/6 MALMO, SE
Malmo Americana

11/6 OSLO, NO
Oslo Americana

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MEET KASSA OVERALL: VIRTUOSO DRUMMER, RAP CONFESSOR, BACKPACK JAZZ PRODUCER!

KASSA OVERALL can pinpoint the exact moment he gambled on a solo career. "In January 2017 I stopped drinking and booked some time at Strange Weather Studios," says the 40-year-old from his garden shed in Seattle, a space rammed with keyboards, drums and recording ephemera. "I wanted to make an album that mixed my jazz background with my production and hip-hop background. I'd never mixed the worlds together – it was almost like my professional thing and my just-for-fun thing. After that session I knew I had something."

The son of an ethnomusicologist mother and saxophonist father, by his teens Overall was drumming professionally at jazz shows, expressing his hip-hop skills on the side by rapping over OutKast instrumentals. After studying jazz drums and music theory at Oberlin Conservatory under Billy Hart (part of Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi), Overall became a fixture on New York's jazz circuit, playing with Ravi Coltrane, Geri Allen and Jon Batiste, but in 2019 he emailed his bandleaders. "I said I wouldn't be available to tour as I was putting out an album and needed room to let it cook."

Overall's uninhibited approach bypassed previous jazz/rap fusions on that year's debut *Go Get Ice Cream And Listen To Jazz*. Armed with just a laptop, an audio interface and a microphone, the self-styled 'backpack jazz producer' biked around NYC to record collaborations he would chop up and reconstruct later.

> "This album is not so much about me in my head, but me against the world."
> KASSA OVERALL

Overall's star really started to rise with 2020 follow-up *I Think I'm Good*, with confessionals touching on his own mental health struggles. "I was expressing what got me to where I am and getting comfortable sharing that. It was a therapeutic process."

With its trippy sound collages and fractal soundscapes, new LP *Animals* is Overall's most sure-footed yet. "Everybody else had to deal with these mental health questions with Covid, so this album is more outward – not so much about me in my head, but me against the world." Not that its gestation was easy. "The process is kinda absurd," he says, waving one of several hard-drives of unused material in the air. "I make so much stuff, but it takes a long, long time to get it to sound right. When I make an album it's like a movie – not so much a collection of songs but a whole story that fits together." Edited with an auteur's technical surety, guests including Laura Mvula, Danny Brown and Vijay Iyer help flesh-out miniatures that invariably contain multitudes.

"There's a lot of great music today, but so much is retro," Overall says, "it takes a lot of work to do something innovative. But if you build your own unique house, it's never going to go out of style."

Andy Cowan

Nayquan Shuler

"It takes a lot of work to do something innovative": Kassa Overall takes hip-hop/jazz to another level.

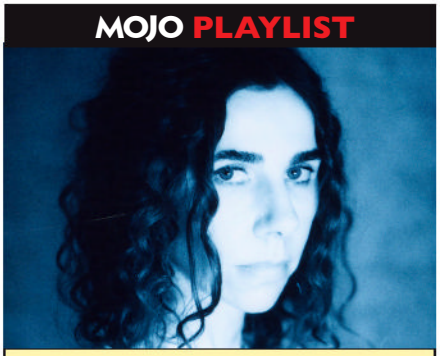
FACT SHEET

- For Fans Of: Kendrick Lamar, Flying Lotus, A Tribe Called Quest, Makaya McCraven
- Overall moved back to hometown Seattle during lockdown. "I'm so glad I went solo before that. Covid almost took out my whole musical ecosystem."
- Among a rare group of jazz musicians who can really rap (see also: Soweto Kinch), Overall's naturalistic flow is a happy mistake: "I'll often write lyrics like a diary, like I'm just writing to myself, so there's no pressure. It started out by accident but now I do it on purpose. By the time you're on-stage, you've gotten over it."
- Asked to name his ideal collaborators, alive or dead, Overall eventually decides on "Erykah Badu, Madlib, Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman and The Beatles. That's a good line-up!"

KEY TRACKS

- My Friend
- Show Me A Prison
- Ready To Ball

MOJO PLAYLIST



Turn on! For the month's best rock romance, jazz and ghost songs.

1 P.J. HARVEY – A CHILD'S QUESTION, AUGUST
The first taste of a new LP, a static reverberation of guitar and thudding tom-toms ground a haunting, delicate melody, with olde worlde imagery of rooks and corn spinning an ancient, ghostly love song.
Find it: *streaming services*

2 GARTH HUDSON – SOPHISTICATED LADY
The Band's keyboard genius plays a Duke Ellington tune at a private show in upstate New York. Not a dry eye in the house.
Find it: *Twitter*

3 ARTHUR RUSSELL – THE BOY WITH A SMILE
An etheric cello-wobbler from upcoming set *Picture Of Bunny Rabbit*, which collects unreleased *World Of Echo*-period material.
Find it: *BandCamp*

4 GRIAN CHATTEN – THE SCORE
Fontaines D.C.'s frontman Grian Chatten opens with a deftly plucked acoustic guitar before skittering electronics take an *In Rainbows* direction. Glowing.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 LUCINDA WILLIAMS (WITH PATTI SCIALFA AND BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN) – NEW YORK COMEBACK
Weathered rock'n'roll romance and affirmation, aided by Bruce and Patti.
Find it: *YouTube*

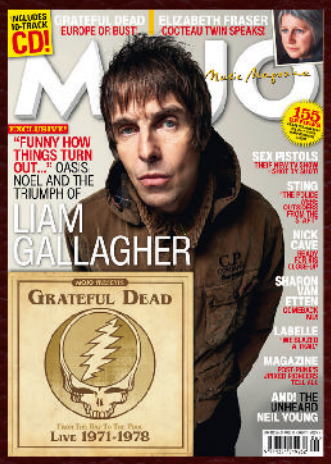
6 NICKY WIRE – CONTACT SHEETS
A feel-sad hit of summer as Wire previews his new LP: like late-era Felt infiltrating Ringo's Photograph for memories "you just can't delete".
Find it: *nickywire.bandcamp*

7 JULIE BYRNE – SUMMER GLASS
An accepting elegy with arpeggiating electronics, Byrne's aching vocal and metaphors of departure.
Find it: *YouTube*

8 ALABASTER DEPLUME – SALTY ROAD DOGS VICTORY ANTHEM
The jazz mage and band's new battle theme: *Éthiopiques* sax incantations; post-punk bottom end; echo deck dub FX… a big win.
Find it: *streaming services*

9 SONS OF KEN – WORK ALL NITE
After the 'Aisis' AI faux-Gallaghers LP, a computer sings over Tom Tom Club/Rushent/Dust Bros belt-loosened funk for whiskery B-boys.
Find it: *BandCamp*

10 DAME EDNA EVERAGE – S&M LADY
We could've gone with her Disco Matilda or The Leader Of The Pack, but here the Housewife Superstar goes punk/sleaze in 1978 (farewell, Barry Humphries).
Find it: *YouTube*



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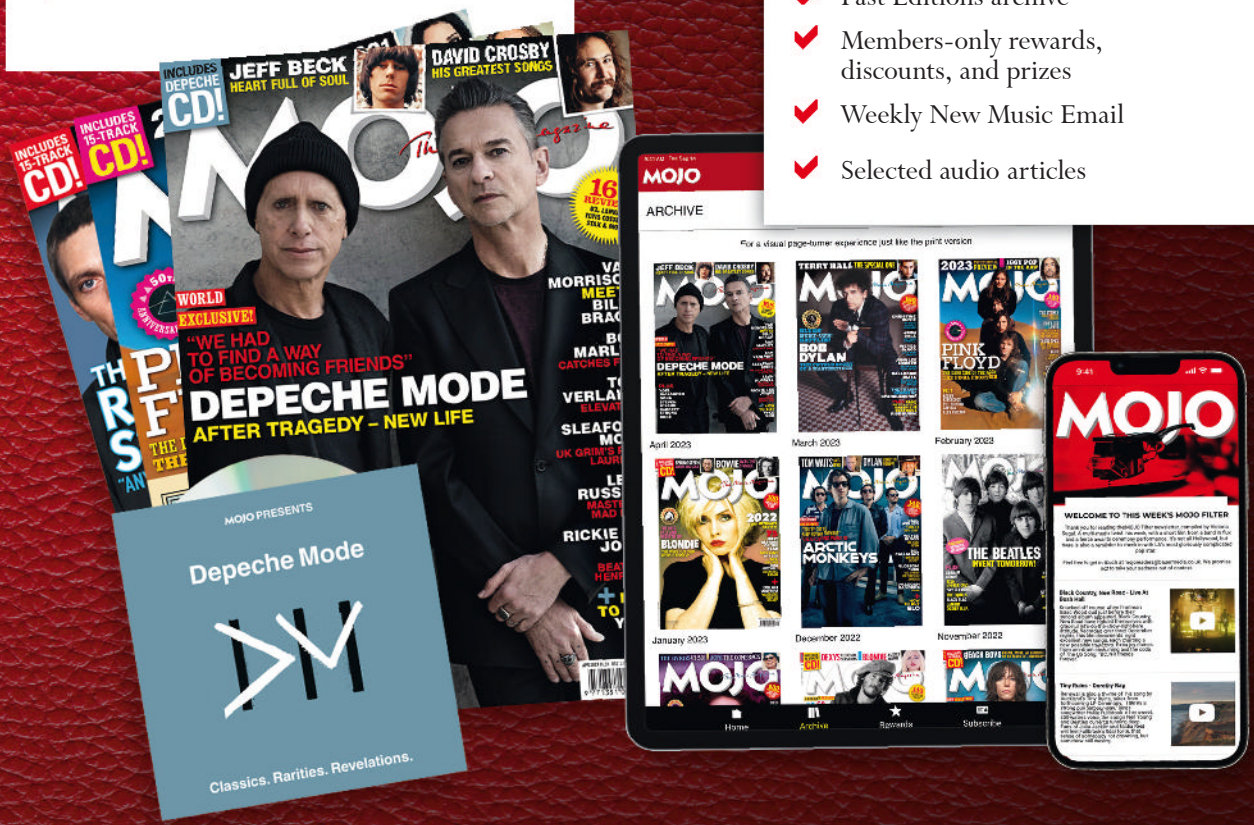

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Fronting the '60s' **most anomalous band**, he was a choirboy among "pirates and brigands". **A Zombie and a gentleman** in 2023, his remains a unique path through rock'n'roll. **"The less I try, the more successful I am,"** reckons **Colin Blunstone**.

Interview by **JIM IRVIN** • Portrait by **ALEX LAKE**

DECEMBER 23, 1963. THE ZOMBIES ARE appearing at the Market Hall in their hometown, St Albans. They're becoming the town's buzziest beat group, having played 25 gigs in the last 12 weeks of the year, all local, in venues including the Waverley Youth Club and the Girls Grammar School, occasionally venturing to neighbouring Hitchin or Luton, but yet to play a significant show out of town. They can't possibly guess that in exactly a year's time, on December 23, 1964, they will be sitting on a plane to New York because their first single for Decca records, She's Not There, will have hit Number 1 on America's Cashbox charts.

It's an extraordinary recording with an attention-grabbing bass line, a choppy, almost Latin drum part and a suggestion of jazz to it, driven by its composer, 19-year-old Rod Argent, on his Hohner Pianet electric piano, an unusual sound in pop at this point. Singer Colin Blunstone is apparently an R&B-tutored choirboy, beginning coolly, breathily, with the memorable line, "Well, no one told me about her…" but ending the choruses in an urgent falsetto, all gulps and gasps as if he might collapse from teenage emotion. Critic Ian MacDonald called it "one of the maddest vocals ever carved in vinyl." The single pricks up the ears of George Harrison on Juke Box Jury. It transfixes a 13-year-old Tom Petty and his brother as they get ready for school. It influences The Turtles and the nascent Doors. Five schoolkids from genteel St Albans, trying out this pop lark before university or proper jobs beckon, are suddenly vaulted to the toppermost of the poppermost.

Following that, the only available direction is down. After years of touring and a few more successes around the world, though less chart action at home, The Zombies are feeling tired and underappreciated. They have one ambition to fulfil, to produce their own album of original material. They sign to CBS in 1967 and go into Abbey Road's Studio 3 to make *Odessey And Oracle*. It's terrific work, but isn't a success, and soon after its completion Colin Blunstone is leaving showbiz for a steady job in insurance.

But, via a picaresque route, The Zombies prevail. Blunstone, now in his late seventies – his face sculpted with experience, his hair surprisingly luxuriant, his voice youthful and softly-spoken – is charming company. He's facing the media for the launch of the seventh Zombies studio album, *Different Game*, two days before a rare UK tour, still jetlagged after a lengthy series of American shows where, he points out delightedly, they're playing in front of gratifyingly young crowds numbering up to 7,000 a night. Though he admits they can't last for ever, he still finds performing vivifying. "You come off stage on an occasion like that and you're flying."

This new album is full of energy. What brought it on?

Our induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame [in 2019]. It seemed as though the band was playing absolutely at its best and then we were involved in this wonderful evening of musical celebration. We ended up in the studio and decided to record with all of us in the room together so that we're ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Robert Fripp on a singer of "pure quality".

"1971's *One Year* blew me away. The collaboration between voice and strings is astonishing, like nothing else in popular music – a meeting of different worlds. It still has the power to transport me to another place. And the pure quality of Colin's voice... He sings and immediately he has me."

Alex Lake, Biff Blumfumgagnge

working off one another's energies, and it really does make a difference.

Do you feel you still have something to prove?

Yes. Perhaps in a more relaxed way than I used to feel it. You can always improve, always learn.

I'd imagine you're coming from a different direction with the writing than you were in your twenties.

Of course. I think it's a bit unbecoming for someone in the autumn of their career to be singing trivial love songs.

Have you dusted off some of the old songs and gone, "No way!"?

There's one called I Love You, a Zombies tune written by Chris [White], which people love. When we first played it in rehearsal, my knees went because I was laughing so much: "We can't do this!" It's got so many 'I love you's in it, it's a bit over the top. Also, [the narrator] is tongue-tied about whether he can tell this person he loves them or not. There have been times I've been singing it and in my mind going, Oh, for God's sake get on with it! But when you're singing to two or three thousand people, you have to keep these thoughts to yourself.

When did you first think, "Oh, I can sing"?

I met one of my old neighbours a few years ago, and they told me that, before they knew my name, they used to call me The Boy Who Sings. I was someone who sang all the time, to myself, as a child. That was my early musical education. But when we started the band, I was rhythm guitarist and Rod [Argent] was going to be lead guitar and singer. During a break in the rehearsal, Rod went over to an old piano and played Nut Rocker by B. Bumble & The Stingers. He was obviously in a different league to us. I'd just met him, I didn't know him, and I said to him, "You should play keyboards in the band." But he was adamant it was a rock'n'roll band with three guitars. At the end of the rehearsal, he still hadn't sung, because we were just doing instrumentals. I was putting my guitar away and being The Boy Who Sings, singing a Ricky Nelson song, It's Late, to myself. Rod heard me and said, "If you'll be lead singer, I'll play keyboards." And that's probably the first time I thought, Maybe I can sing.

The band formed in 1961, pre-Beatles, so what were your expectations, your ambitions as a group at that point?

Well, at 15 years old, to actually play a gig in front of people. That would have been our main aim, one gig. It took us about a year. It was a little youth club in a village called Lemsford, just outside Hatfield, and I loved it. They always used to have a slow dance at the end, where people had a bit of a clinch, and they'd put the lights down. We played a Shadows tune called Nivram. There's a bass solo in the middle, quite adventurous for the day, but the lights were so low our bass player started on the wrong fret. I like to think it sounded very modern, him in a different key to the rest of us. But no one cared, they were concentrating on clinching.

At the end of 1963, you had 25 gigs booked just in St Albans and the environs. At that point you hadn't played in London yet.

No, in fact, we very rarely played in London, even after we had hit records. We won this big competition for bands in the spring of 1964, at Watford Town Hall – called The Herts Beat Competition – because we won that, we got a contract with Decca. Our first single was She's Not There, which was a hit, and we signed with a company that put us onto those package tours straight away. So we never played the Marquee, Klooks Kleek, all of those clubs, we missed out on that.

The Zombies had a notably different aura as a band. Was your alternative route one of the reasons?

Yes. Also, it pains me to say this… we had a half-hour meeting with the Decca press office where they were saying, "We need to find you an image." And they found a very empty, shallow one.

They promoted you as posh boys with a load of O-Levels, didn't they?

I wasn't going to say that! Yes, unfortunately. Firstly, it's not true. We might have had a few O-Levels but you know…

Two of you wore glasses. Must be brainy!

Yeah, it was very lazy. We didn't have any of that in America.

Did that image hurt you in Britain?

Yes, I think it did. It does still raise its ugly head from time to time. People want bands to be dangerous. Pirates and brigands. And we were pushed as the absolute opposite of that.

When you signed to Decca you went looking for management…

Yes, the first we went to see was a guy called George Cooper, who had a reputation of being a tough guy, on the fringes of gangster land. We were all very apprehensive about him.

The second one… unfortunately, I can't remember this guy's name, because it was extraordinary. It was on a Sunday morning at some mansion flats in Maida Vale. He worked with a group called the Countrymen and he opened the door to his flat dressed in just a silk dressing gown.

Red flag!

Yes, and we walked in, and he gave us the speech, and it wasn't particularly convincing. We decided to leave and he stood up and took us to the door and as he was saying goodbye, I dunno, perhaps there was a sudden gust of wind or something, but his door slammed shut and he was locked out. So we're stuck with this guy we don't even know, with only a dressing gown on. And he said, "Look lads, if we go

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Zombie picks: Colin down the years.

1 The Boy Who Sings: Colin Blunstone, aged 10, begins his musical education.

2 Geek myth: The Zombies (from left, Paul Atkinson, Hugh Grundy, Blunstone, Chris White, Rod Argent) in 1964, "lazily" promoted as posh boys with O-Levels.

3 Suited and booted: Colin on-stage with The Zombies at Murray The K's Big Holiday Show, Brooklyn Fox Theater, NY, December 29, 1964.

4 Working the *Oracle*: the band (from left, Atkinson, Blunstone, White, Grundy, Argent) recording *Odessey* at EMI's Abbey Road studios, London, September 1967.

5 Miracle worker: the solo Colin keeps faith, January 17, 1973.

6 "I always try to get into the mood of a song": Blunstone performing on-stage in the UK, 1973.

7 Friends of mine: The Zombies (from left, Argent, Grundy, White, Blunstone) at the MOJO Honours List Awards, 2009.

8 Night of the living dead: Colin performing with The Zombies, Madrid, 2017.

9 "It all comes from deep within, however corny that might sound": Blunstone, keeping it real, in 1973.

Courtesy Colin Blunstone, Getty (7), Shutterstock

around the back of the flats, there's this bit of machinery that I put my dustbin out with." So we go there and it's like a wooden lift device, on a pulley. And he said, "If I get into the dustbin holder, would you lads pull on this rope?" God, does he think he's gonna be our manager after this? I promise you one thing, I wasn't going to look up. Too much information. He managed to get in through a window. We never saw him again.

I bet he did that to all the groups!

It was a bit weird. We also talked to someone who was recommended by Chris White's uncle, a chap called Ken Jones. He was in partnership with a guy called Joe Roncoroni, who had a company called Marquis Music. And we went with them. All our records were signed to Marquis Music, not to the record company.

So it was all licensed to Decca?

Yes, and to CBS later. We didn't earn any money in the '60s, but we've been fortunate in later life to have benefited from that as the rights have all reverted to us.

Ken Jones produced all the early records, too, didn't he?

Yes, everything up to *Odessey And Oracle*. Ken was great, a really good musician and a lovely guy. But he was always trying to recreate She's Not There. It got to the point where, particularly the writers, Rod and Chris, became very frustrated with the production on our records. They all sounded rather thin and tame. And we weren't like that live at all.

But She's Not There was an extraordinary recording.

Our first session in a professional studio, Decca in West Hampstead. We arrived in the evening and unfortunately the recording engineer had been at a wedding all day, and he was absolutely paralytic. Not only blind drunk, very aggressive. After 20 minutes of being in the studio – and I'd just about got my headphones on – this guy was screaming through them at me. And I was thinking, I don't think this recording business is for me. This is after 20 minutes. And here I am 60 years later, still in it! But soon after that he collapsed, passed out cold. We carried him out of the studio, one Zombie on each limb, up two flights of stairs and put him in a taxi. His assistant took over, that was Gus Dudgeon [soon-to-be legendary producer of *Space Oddity* and Elton John], his first session as chief engineer. So She's Not There nearly didn't happen. Nothing The Zombies has done has been simple, or traditional, or straightforward.

> "People want **bands to be dangerous**. And The Zombies were pushed as **the absolute opposite** of that."

You sound really desperate on the choruses.

I remember a conversation once, between Rod and me, that went along the lines of: "If you are totally committed to your performance, it can't be wrong." That's a very worthy thought. I'm not sure it's totally true, but it's certainly better than *playing* at what you're doing. If you're totally committed, then at least there's some value to your performance.

The late Jim Rodford, who was in Argent, said The Zombies gelled when Rod bought the Hohner Pianet. Do you remember that being significant?

Oh, absolutely. Because up until then we had to use whatever piano was in whatever place we were playing. Often playing in different keys, because it's an old piano you can't tune to concert pitch. And we couldn't hear what Rod was doing. I'd often judge how good a gig was by how much blood was coming out of his thumb afterwards. When he did his Jerry Lee Lewis glissandos it used to devastate his right hand. "Oh, that was a good night, half a pint of blood from Rod's thumb."

But even with the Pianet, there were moments of disaster. It used to have these little pads on each key that, if we played in a really hot environment, would get moist and sticky. Rod carried a hairdryer with him. I know this sounds unlikely, but we would stop the show, and the audience had a drink and a chat while we had five minutes of drying out the Hohner Pianet with a hairdryer. Audiences were very patient.

So then you're put on these package tours…

That's right. The first tour we did was with The Searchers – who people tend to forget were probably the second-biggest band in the country at the time – The Isley Brothers and Dionne Warwick. What wonderful artists to be in the wings watching! We were 18 and 19 years old, from St Albans, just been playing in the local Working Men's Club, now we're on the bill with these wonderful artists.

Ronnie Isley!

Probably my favourite singer of all. Absolutely wonderful. I was intrigued, because when we travelled with them, the other two, Rudy and Kelly, the backing singers, they used to sing ➢

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Playing a different game: The Zombies in 2023 (from left) Tom Toomey, Colin Blunstone, Rod Argent, Søren Koch and Steve Rodford.

Alex Lake

"I've known a lot of people **who are very confident** and a lot of them have **crashed and burned**."

all the time. Ronnie never sang until showtime. Incredible voice.

Tito Burns was a legendary character of the time and he was your agent, wasn't he?

Yes. A very powerful figure. He really helped us, especially in the early days, because he could get TV shows and national newspapers. But he was a manager of the era. He wasn't really thinking about us lasting, about careers.

Was he the kind of guy who would charge the promoter five hundred quid and tell you it was one hundred?

I'm gonna consider my answer here. There's an element of truth in what you've alluded to. Let's just say that at the end of three years on the road, the three non-writers – myself, Hugh Grundy and Paul Atkinson – were absolutely broke, having played on a lot of hit records all around the world. Rod and Chris were fortunate; we had really honest publishers and they'd done really well. But it was one of the reasons the band finished. I thought *Odessey And Oracle* was the best we could do. I can't say whether it's good or not, that's for other people to judge. I remember [Radio 1 DJ] Kenny Everett got behind it. And a writer called Penny Valentine from Disc wrote a wonderful review. But otherwise, it was ignored. It was really disappointing. And with three of us broke, we felt probably it was time to start thinking about moving on.

What did you set out to achieve with *Odessey And Oracle*?

It was very much driven by Rod and Chris. They wanted their songs to sound as they heard them in their heads when they were writing them. And Rod has always said that he felt the end of the band was in the air. I'm not sure I had the same feeling. Perhaps that's why I was more disappointed when the band finished. I mean, these are all vague feelings from a long, long time ago.…

Rod has said subsequently that he felt you'd started to lose interest halfway through making that record.

We all remember things in different ways. I never lost interest in it. I put everything I'd got into it. But I remember one thing: Butcher's Tale. I was going to sing it. But when the lyric came in about, "I've seen that friend of mine hang on the wire, like some rag doll. And the flies come down on the body," and all that. I said, I can't sing that. We've just recorded Friends Of Mine! And you want me to be singing about dead bodies on a wire? That was the only negative thing I ever said. Personally I think they could have talked me round. But they just said, "All right, Chris will sing it."

And when Time Of The Season was a huge hit subsequently, that wasn't reason enough to get back together again?

Rod and Chris had already started Argent. They've got this production company and they always wanted to look forward. There was never even a discussion about getting back together again. By that point we hadn't played together for a couple of years, it felt too late.

What made you go into insurance?

Desperation. I just needed money. Rod and Chris were in a totally different situation to us, they could afford to try Argent. Some people suggest that might have caused friction in the band. But I don't remember it that way at all. If you're recording and you haven't got a good song you can pack up and go home, you're wasting your time. To have two really prolific, sophisticated writers in the band, I felt lucky, I didn't resent them.

And you didn't fancy writing yourself?

Didn't think I could. Certainly watching them at work encouraged me to try. I wrote two songs for The Zombies. Later on I did write quite a lot more.

You were lured out of insurance by producer Mike Hurst, right?

When The Zombies finished, my phone was absolutely silent. I waited with bated breath and nothing came. Hence my career in insurance. But when Time Of The Season started going up the charts people started calling and one of them was Mike Hurst.

He'd done the early Cat Stevens records: Matthew & Son, I'm Gonna Get Me A Gun, I Love My Dog, and I loved those records. I was so disappointed at the end of The Zombies; I wasn't sure I wanted to get back into music. So we decided he'd get some tracks together at Olympic Studios in Barnes and I'd go in after work, wearing my pinstripe suit, and put vocals down. And Mike had the idea of recording She's Not There again as Neil MacArthur.

Are you the only person ever to have two hits with the same song under different names?

I think I probably am, yes! After three singles, I was coming back from a party with Chris White and he just said to me, "Why don't you forget this Neil MacArthur stuff? Rod and I have this production company, come and record with us." And I thought that was a fantastic idea. Studio 3 at Abbey Road where we'd recorded *Odessey And Oracle* with Peter Vince the engineer from that album. Pretty much getting the old team back together again.

Very unusual to have a pop hit, Say You Don't Mind, entirely driven by strings.

The Zombies used to close the show with that Denny Laine song. We tried to record it as a rock'n'roll thing but it didn't work. We'd been introduced to a wonderful string arranger – who sadly died about 10 days ago – Chris Gunning. He was encouraged to think in a very different way to how strings were usually recorded in those days. His arrangement for Misty Roses was like Bartók. So we asked him to try this. People say it's a string quartet. It's arranged like a quartet but it's actually a 21-piece orchestra. As usual, I didn't spot it as a single at all. I really liked it, I just didn't think it was commercial. That's a theme that's run through my career.

What do you think of the solo records, looking back on them?

I like *One Year*, I like some of *Ennismore*. *Journey*? Could do better. Though one of my favourite songs I ever wrote is on there, Keep The Curtains Closed Today, I love that song.

UNDEAD GOOD

Three bites of the Zombie, by **Jim Irvin**.

PSYCH!

The Zombies

★★★★★

Odessey And Oracle

(CBS, 1968)

Conceived as a showcase for this musically ambitious bunch after years of dues-paying around the world. Blunstone's bravura leads were supported with ripe harmonies on poignant, character-driven songs as quirky as its misspelt, busy sleeve: Care Of Cell 44, Friends Of Mine and the evergreen Time Of The Season. But by the time it was entering the US charts a year later, Blunstone had a new job as an insurance claims clerk.

STRINGS!

Colin Blunstone

★★★★★

One Year

(EPIC, 1971)

A daring and enduring meld of '70s rock and chamber orchestration, in arrangements by the late Chris Gunning, Tony Visconti and co-producer Rod Argent. Its uniquely elegant mood has entranced the likes of Robert Pollard, Robert Fripp and Jeff Buckley (inspiring the strings on *Grace*). Highlights: Tim Hardin's Misty Roses, Blunstone's own Caroline Goodbye written for '70s star model Caroline Munro, and the hit cover of Denny Laine's Say You Don't Mind.

SIGHS!

Colin Blunstone

★★★★

Ennismore

(EPIC, 1973)

Opening with the stately and shivery hit I Don't Believe In Miracles, his second solo album (named after the address of his Knightsbridge flat-share) is a soft-rock masterpiece, largely self-composed. His vocal delivery is a stunning lesson in poise and delicacy, cooling the R&B phrasing into a style all his own. Neil Tennant called it "the missing link between Dusty Springfield and Nick Drake." Gorgeous from beginning to closing ballad How Could We Dare To Be Wrong.

A dispute with CBS stopped you working for a while, and then the '80s were quite quiet apart from the singles What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted and Old And Wise.

Yes, it did go a bit quiet.

You didn't think of going back into insurance?

(*Laughing*) No, I didn't actually. But I was really lucky in one respect. It was right at that moment that I met my wife. I couldn't have been at a lower ebb, so I knew she wasn't interested in me for the glamour of my situation! And she was fantastic, supporting me on all sorts of levels. So you know, even in your darkest hour…

Your voice has been described as "inherently sad". Does that feel like a true reflection?

It possibly is true. But if I'm singing something up-tempo and ecstatic I always try to get into the mood of the song. I'm very aware of the words I'm singing. But I know I'm better known as a 'romantic balladeer' (*laughs*).

When you were The Boy Who Sings, was that to comfort yourself?

Oh no, the opposite, I just loved singing. But I do get wound up in beautifully sad lyrics.

I like The Sun Will Rise Again on the new LP. It seems to be set in a sweet spot for both your voice and the emotional delivery.

That song is from a father to a child. It's a love song, but not a romantic love song. My daughter was going through a really difficult time and it's line for line how I was feeling as a father, watching my daughter going through a bad time. Certainly melancholy in that sense.

You can tell it's come from a real place.

I'm pleased you say that, because that word 'real' is one that Rod and I use all the time. We try to make everything we do real: the writing, the performing, the recording. It all comes from deep within. However corny that might sound, it's the truth.

For someone with such a distinctive instrument, you've conducted your career very modestly. You're not one of nature's self-promoters?

Absolutely not, no. I've known a lot of people who are very confident and very self-promoting and a lot of them have crashed and burned. It's a tough old game. I'm very aware of that. But it doesn't fill 24 hours a day in my life.

To choose the medium of pop music as your conduit to the world is an odd thing to do, if you think about it.

It is. But in some ways, I didn't choose it. It chose me. By chance I sat next to a guy in school who knew Rod Argent, which got me into The Zombies. Almost by chance we won a competition, which led to a record contract. I didn't do anything positive in any of that, except gave up some of my weekends to play gigs.

But I wonder if that's maybe why it feels like you're approaching it in a unique way, because it's like…

…I'm not totally immersed in it? No, I'm not really, that is absolutely true. I love writing, recording and playing concerts. But when I'm not doing that, I can find other things that I love doing and feel fulfilled and happy. I know a lot of people who are incredibly driven with regard to music, and it can be really challenging for them. And I'm not like that. You've got to take it seriously, but don't let it dominate your life.

Early on, I realised that most of the things I *tried* to achieve weren't successful. But when I was being passive, really good things happened. That's my cop-out! The less I try, the more successful I am. A great excuse for doing nothing, which I think I'm very good at!

The Rebel

ASSEMBLED FOR ONE LAST BLAG:

STEVE JONES,

PAUL COOK,

TONY JAMES

AND BILLY IDOL,

PUNK SURVIVORS SEEKING FUN, NOT REDEMPTION, AS

GENERATION SEX.

PREVIOUSLY, HEROIN AND HEART ATTACKS HINDERED THEIR COMING TOGETHER. BUT, SO FAR AT LEAST, IT SEEMS THE STARS HAVE ALIGNED. "IT WAS EFFORTLESS, REALLY," THEY ASSURE PAT GILBERT.

PORTRAITS BY BILL ROWNTREE AND PAUL COX.

Alliance

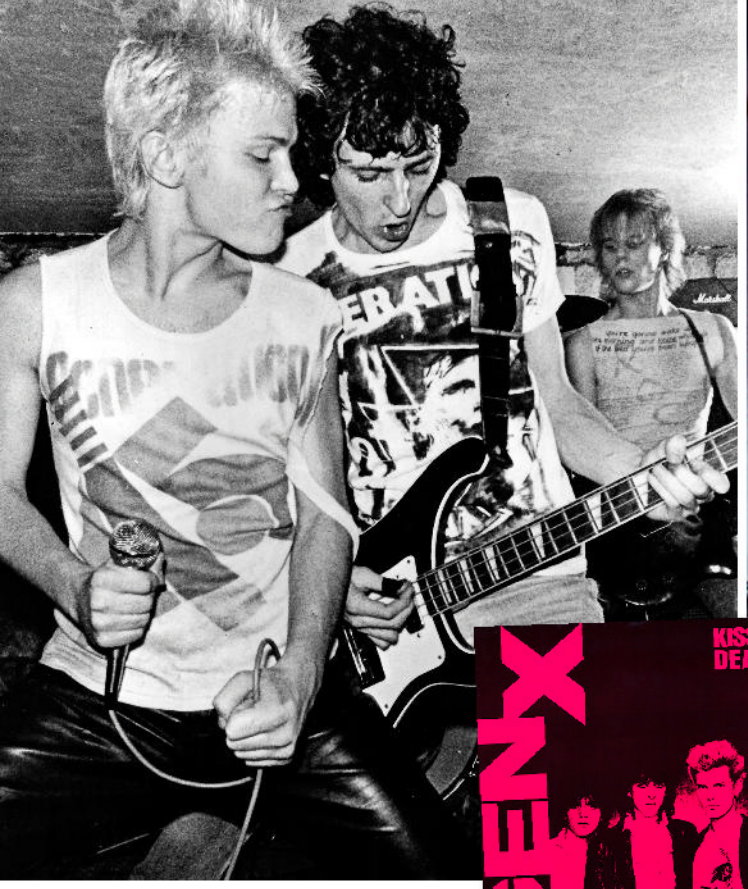
If the kids are united: the two halves of Generation Sex, back in the day (from left) Sex Pistols' Paul Cook and Steve Jones, 1977; Generation X's Billy Idol and Tony James, 1979.

IN SUMMER 1980, ELEMENTS OF TWO OF London's most iconic punk bands joined forces – though not necessarily in the cheeriest of circumstances. Billy Idol and Tony James of Generation X, now trading as Gen X after the original line-up splintered the previous year, were desperately seeking a chart hit to justify the sizeable investment by Chrysalis Records in a floundering third album.

Sessions for a comeback single, Dancing With Myself, were booked at George Martin's AIR Studios, overlooking Oxford Circus in the heart of central London. For the rhythm guitar part, Idol and James called upon their old friend Steve Jones, the former Sex Pistol who'd not long returned from a holiday in Thailand, where his growing heroin habit – acquired after his band's messy end – had been stoked by some of the purest smack in South-east Asia. No one could have predicted the rock'n'roll chaos that ensued.

"There were bottles of methadone all over the place," recalls Tony James today. "Steve ended up playing guitar ➢

Bill Rowntree/Mirrorpix/Getty Images, Paul Cox/LFI



"I CAME OUT OF THE TOILET AND STEVE WAS BEING WHEELED OUT ON A GURNEY. HE'D BEEN ROLLING ALL OVER THE MIXING DESK." BILLY IDOL

Wild youth: (clockwise from far left) Generation X at Gibus Club, Paris, October 1977 (from left) Billy Idol, Tony James, Bob 'Derwood' Andrews; Sex Pistols at Dunstable Queensway Hall, October 21, 1976 (from left) Glen Matlock, Johnny Rotten, Paul Cook, Steve Jones; (insets) Gen X's *Kiss Me Deadly* and Dancing With Myself 45.

Ray Stevenson, Getty

➤ on his back, surrounded by a ring of amplifiers. But the sound he made was just great."

Equally extraordinary was Jones's behaviour when he returned to the control room. With his Les Paul still plugged in, he climbed outside onto a window ledge and began striking rock'n'roll poses to the amusement of several hundreds of tourists below. Back inside, he then suffered a massive epileptic seizure.

"I was a fucking mess," says Jones. "I got these codeine-based pills to help me feel normal because the smack in Thailand was so strong. I was listening to a playback and then… I don't really remember."

"I came out of the toilet and Steve was being wheeled out on a gurney by the St John's Ambulance Brigade," marvels Billy Idol, himself by then also a heroin addict. "He'd been rolling all over the mixing desk. Then he started frothing at the mouth. As he was wheeled out he said, 'All right Bill, I'll see you later at the club.' What club?!"

The motorik Dancing With Myself, expertly produced by Giorgio Moroder's drummer Keith Forsey, was released in October 1980, but stalled at Number 62. Three months later, its parent album *Kiss Me Deadly* failed to chart at all, effectively ending Gen X's career. But Jones's inspired contributions sparked excited talk of a possible Generation X-Sex Pistols supergroup.

"Billy and I talked about having two drummers, Paul Cook and Terry Chimes," says Tony James. "But contractually it was difficult as Steve and Paul were already doing The Professionals. Also, chemically, it would have been a troublesome possibility."

But some things are worth waiting for. This summer, 43 years later, the envisioned punk amalgam is finally ready to unleash itself on the public, with Idol, James, Cook and Jones performing together as Generation Sex at summer festival shows in Europe. Kicking it off is a much-anticipated support slot with Iggy Pop and Blondie at Crystal Palace Bowl on July 1.

But how did this many-headed punk Hydra come about? And who thought up the slightly pervy name? And will the ageing supergroupers have the stamina to last the course? "I'm looking forward to doing it," Jones says, but warns: "if it ain't any fun, I'm out of there…"

IT'S A LATE-MARCH EVENING, AND MOJO IS Zooming Steve Jones at his home in LA. The guitarist – subject of the recent Disney+ biopic series Pistol, based on his revelatory memoir Lonely Boy – has now been clean for over 20 years, while profitable Pistols reunions have brought him the filthy lucre the group were denied first time around. "Let me show you this," he says, flipping his camera-phone to show a terrace with a plush tennis court and stunning views over Hollywood. "'Oo says punk don't pay?"

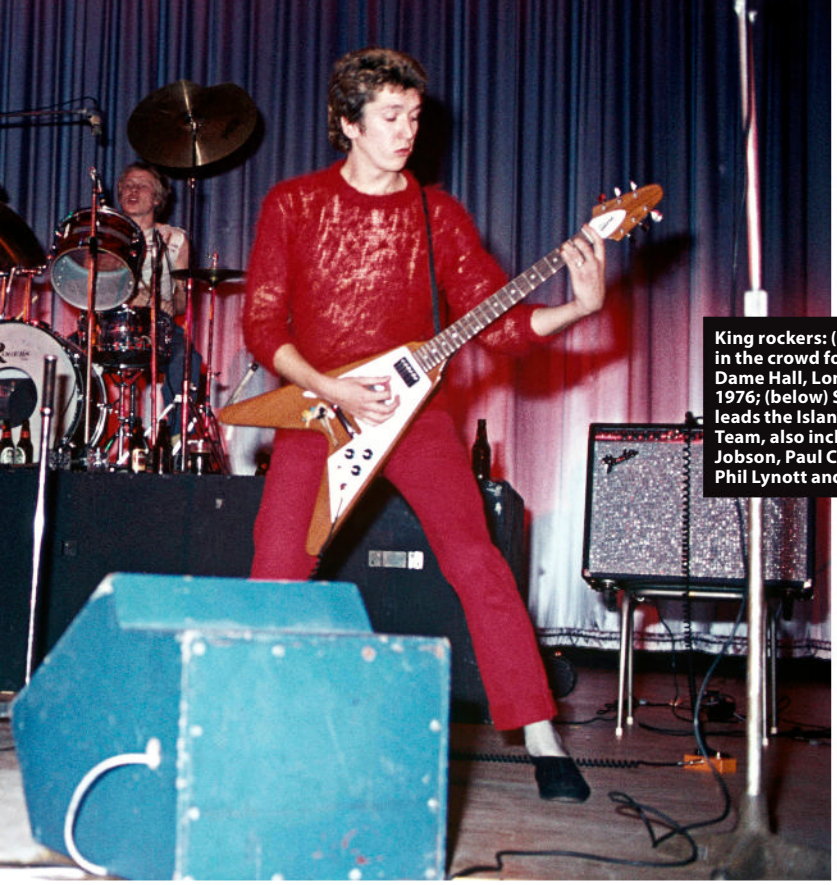
Jones looks much trimmer than he has in recent years, the result of a health scare that followed two low-key Generation Sex try-outs in 2018, one a free gig at the Roxy club in LA, the other at a private party in New York for jewellery brand Chrome Hearts. The setlist was manna for punk connoisseurs – Ready Steady Go, Dancing With Myself, No One Is Innocent, The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle, Silly Thing – but all was not well.

"I was fucking well overweight at those shows," explains Jones, in that familiar lugubrious tone. "I never worked out, all I did was eat, and I had a heart attack a few months afterwards. I've seen the films people made on their phones of us playing. I was literally fucked. Afterwards, I was dying, dying."

When the guitarist recovered, Covid-19 scuppered plans for further Generation Sex performances, and with Billy Idol back touring, Paul Cook busy with the resurrected Professionals and Tony James involved with various art and music projects, syncing diaries after lockdown proved problematic.

"But now the stars are in alignment," says Cook. "We've persuaded Steve to come to England for rehearsals – amazing, as he doesn't like leaving LA – then Billy will join us when the music's ready. It shouldn't take long to be match-fit."

Exactly where and when the story of Generation Sex begins isn't easy to fathom, a task not aided by its members' often blurred or comically divergent memories. What can't be disputed is their lives have fatefully intertwined for nearly five decades. MOJO contends that the first significant Gen-Sex interaction occurred in or around October 1975, when Tony James accompanied his friend and future Clash star Mick Jones to the Sex Pistols' mildewed rehearsal den in Denmark Street.



King rockers: (right, top) Billy Idol in the crowd for Sex Pistols, Notre Dame Hall, London, November 15, 1976; (below) Steve Jones (centre) leads the Island All Star Football Team, also including Richard Jobson, Paul Cook, Tony James, Phil Lynott and Billy Idol, 1979.

At the time, Johnny Rotten and crew, still yet to play a gig, were auditioning for a possible second guitarist. With the Pistols' raunchy punk image and snarky attitude already in place, the meeting that day would prove pivotal.

"I remember Mick and I both being completely freaked out that they had really short hair," says James, "especially having spent our school days growing ours long. We were still going for that kind of New York Dolls look. We thought to be rebellious you needed long hair."

"Tony and Mick turned up looking like a couple of stick insects, really skinny, all in leathers with long hair," offers Paul Cook. "But what we realised was that they were like-minded souls. The same age, into the same things. The fact Tony was middle-class? We didn't care, the Pistols were never into that class warfare thing."

"I remember Mick coming down but I don't remember Tony being there," counters Jones. (*Thinks*) "Didn't I meet him later on?"

Having seen the future of rock'n'roll, James and Mick Jones redoubled their efforts to form their own group. The short-lived London SS – famously an incubator for many other punk faces – initially lacked vital sound equipment; Jones obliged by loaning them the microphones he'd stolen from David Bowie's Ziggy shows at Hammersmith Odeon.

If a favour needed to be returned, James did it in characteristically canny style. On December 1, 1976, as the Pistols passed from obscurity into infamy when Steve Jones called Billy Grundy a "fucking rotter" on prime-time television, James was watching the programme at his neighbour's home in Twickenham. The neighbour was none other than Neil Aspinall, the manager of The Beatles' Apple Corps empire.

"I used to babysit for Neil," reveals James. "He used to let me practise my bass in his basement. One evening I was watching TV with him and it was, like, I know those guys being interviewed… He had one of the first-ever video recorders in the country, so I said, Put the tape on! It became the only [home] recording of the Grundy show. I told Malcolm McLaren and he couldn't believe it. They used it for the Pistols promo film [Sex Pistols Number 1]."

At the time of the Grundy incident, Tony James was gearing up for the debut gig by his own new group, Generation X. The singer was a fellow Pistols fan named William Broad, then on the cusp of changing his name to Billy Idol, destined to become one of the biggest pop stars on the planet.

LIKE STEVE JONES, BILLY IDOL HAS LIVED IN CALIFORnia since the 1980s, but unlike his Gen Sex amigo he does not offer a virtual tour of his Malibu home. He sits, headphones in ears, at a computer, positioned in large study stylishly decorated in opulent velvet and red fabrics. 'Oo says punk don't pay?

By the time Idol met Tony James via a music press ad in late summer 1976, he was already well-known to the Pistols as the designated driver of the Bromley Contingent, early adopters of the band from suburban south-east London led by future Banshees power couple Siouxsie Sioux and Steve Severin.

"I'd get up early in the morning and work for my dad 'til five or six, then I'd get in his Ford delivery van and drive into London," recalls Billy. "Then I'd meet everyone at Louise's [the gay club in Soho where Pistols and friends could drink unmolested] and at the end of the evening drive everyone home. That was my life!"

He coos proudly at having attended the birth of one of rock's greatest album titles. "I was at Louise's the night Steve kept going, 'Never mind the bollocks!'" he recalls. "The Pistols were like nothing we'd ever witnessed before. They were great, great times."

It was the tireless Idol who elected to ferry the Bromley Contingent to Paris when the Pistols played their first overseas shows, at the Club Le Chalet Du Lac on the edge of the city in early September 1976. "It was pretty wild," recalls the singer. "[The French audience] just didn't get what the band were about. Siouxsie was wearing her swastika armband, it was like walking art."

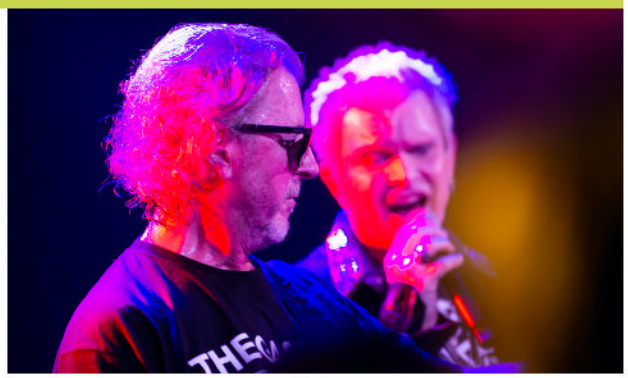
Jones, once again, isn't so sure of the facts. "Was Billy there? I don't remember that," he says, his memory possibly blurred by his 21st birthday celebrations that day, for which "Malcolm bought me some smack and a hooker."

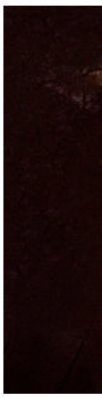
With the Pistols off the road throughout much of 1977 due to the furore over the Grundy incident, Cook and Jones were left to watch from the sidelines as their progeny – including Buzzcocks, The Jam and Generation X – gained fervent live followings and scored minor chart hits. It was, according to Cook, a bittersweet experience.

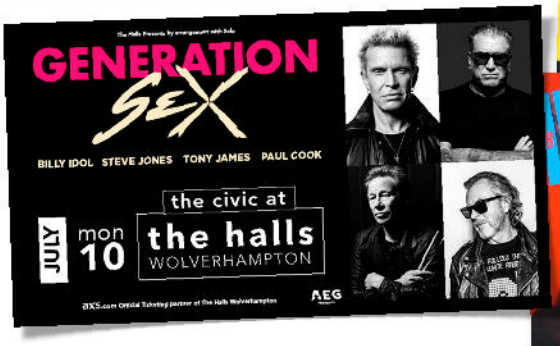
"I didn't know what to think, to be honest," reflects the drummer. "We thought we were the bee's knees, and then people seemed to be forming bands every week. I saw Generation X play at the Roxy [in Covent Garden]. They were different, more at the poppy end of things, I thought."

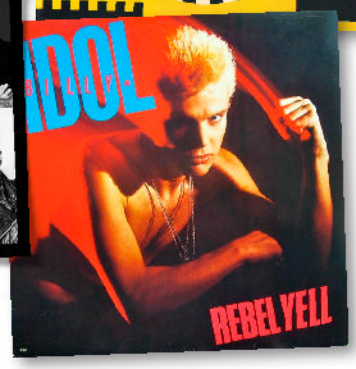
Jones remembers being more enthusiastic. "I liked their energy and where they were coming from," he says. "I loved ➢

Getty, Justinthomasphotography.co.uk









Ready, steady, go: Idol and Jones in a pre-Generation Sex team-up, LA, 2013; (right, clockwise from top: James and Idol, Jones, Cook) Gen Sex's live debut at The Roxy, West Hollywood, 2018; (opposite page, clockwise) Idol in his solo pomp; Jones in the late '80s; Gen Sex setlist; James (far left) with Sigue Sigue Sputnik; (insets) *Chiefs Of Relief* LP; Idol's *Rebel Yell* LP; Gen Sex Wolverhampton online flyer.

Albert Sanchez, Getty (3), Jessica Moncrief shot for Janky Smooth (3)

> "IF THERE ARE PERSONALITY CONFLICTS AND IT BECOMES A DRAG, THEN I'M TOO OLD TO PUT UP WITH THAT SHIT." **STEVE JONES**

◄ [Generation X's 1978 single] Ready Steady Go, that's a *great* song. The best thing, though, was Billy, he was so fucking good-looking. We were more… rough and ready."

AFTER THE PISTOLS SPLINTERED AMID MUCH rancour in spring 1978, Cook and Jones were able to associate more freely with their erstwhile punk rivals. Idol vividly remembers joining the two of them on-stage in London at Christmas 1978, though he has no idea at which venue; the Pistols, meanwhile, have no recollection whatsoever of any such event occurring. "Perhaps it did happen," adds Cook, trying to help.

Indeed, the '79 punk almanac becomes an increasingly befuddled tome, as many of the movement's progenitors saw their mercurial careers nosedive, at the same time as heroin insinuated itself into the scene. Though Generation X scored chart hits with King Rocker and Valley Of The Dolls, their whizz-kid guitarist Bob 'Derwood' Andrews quit later the same year, quickly followed by Keith Moon-ish drummer Mark Laff. Meanwhile, Tony James was consuming super-strength Valium tablets following a near nervous breakdown sparked by the in-fighting. It was a dark time.

"I had a hollow feeling," says Jones. "We were still doing *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* [film and soundtrack] but it was a fucking low point for me. That's when I started delving into smack."

Ironically, the trenchantly opiate-averse James found himself presiding over punk's premier shooting gallery, as his flat in Pindock Mews, Maida Vale – the former home of Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen – became a magnet for the scene's biggest junkies.

"Steve stayed there, so did [ex-New York Dolls] Jerry Nolan and Johnny Thunders," says James. "I sat on the settee and played bass with them. Did it seem weird them being heroin addicts? No, I just thought, OK, isn't that what rock'n'roll people do?"

"It was an ugly, horrible place," winces Cook. "I never went there."

After Gen X were dropped, in spring 1981 Billy Idol went to New York to try his luck as a solo artist, taking with him a Gretsch Country Gentleman guitar and a habit. Twelve months later, Jones was there too, having refused to board a plane home after a US tour with The Professionals. Though the two would bump into each other occasionally at the Continental after-hours club, they recall connecting musically only once, when Jones joined Idol for an impromptu late-night jam.

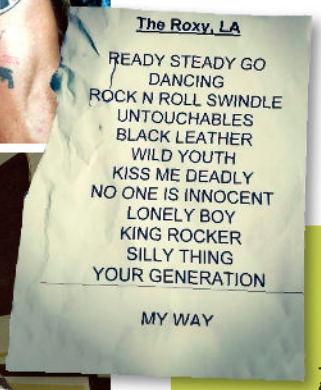
"I was playing with [guitarist and co-writer] Steve Stevens by then," smiles Idol. "I don't think Jonesy thought much of him…"

Within 18 months, Billy Idol would be an MTV superstar, his second solo LP *Rebel Yell* selling two million copies Stateside, while a physically and financially broken Jones moved to LA in an attempt to clean up. "It was hard work being a junkie with no money in a city you didn't know," he sighs. Though Idol would follow him west in the late '80s, occasionally riding Harleys with the same biker gangs, the singer ran with a different crowd and they rarely mixed.

Back home, meanwhile, Tony James was masterminding the whirlwind rise and demise of his much-lampooned electro-punks Sigue Sigue Sputnik ("I wasn't a big fan," confesses Cook), while Cook drummed in the short-lived Chiefs Of Relief. Any notion of a future Gen-Sex collab began to look about as likely as Sid and Nancy returning from their graves. "At that point, I don't think anyone would have come anyway," says Jones, dolefully. "Punk was dead."

But punk's resurrection would happen sooner than most believed possible. In 1993, Generation X re-formed, albeit to play just seven songs for a Billy Idol TV special; three years later, the Sex Pistols sensationally reunited for their Filthy Lucre world tour, healing old wounds – at least for the moment – and "sorting them out" financially. Perhaps all hope for Gen-Sex was not lost.

AS FAR AS TONY JAMES IS CONCERNED, THE FIRST, little-fanfared Generation Sex show at LA's Roxy, on October 30, 2018, was the indirect result of another (failed) reunion the previous year. "Billie Joe Armstrong asked us if we'd put Generation X back together to support Green Day in Hyde Park," says the bassist. "His favourite song is Kiss Me Deadly [from the band's 1978 debut album], that's why he started playing guitar. Billy and I said yes in a heartbeat. Then we asked Derwood and Mark



Laff, and the old issues started to raise their head again. So we said, 'OK, let's *not* do it, then.'"

Yet a seed was planted, and the idea was discussed again when James visited Idol in California the following year. During James's stay, Idol suggested they attend U2's show at the LA Forum. "In the VIP area there were people like Brad Pitt, then suddenly Steve Jones appears and hugs me," recalls the bassist. "He invited us onto his radio show [on KLOS-FM], and before we knew it we'd come up with the idea of Generation Sex live on air."

So whose idea was the name? "It was Steve, I think," says James. "It's fairly obvious – made in heaven, really – and it stuck."

Six months later, James and Cook were flying to LA for a week of rehearsals, to see if the project had legs, with Idol joining them a little later. "He was very professional," remarks Cook. "Totally together, knew all the words. It was effortless, really. Kiss Me Deadly's quite tricky to play, though – you have to be on your toes."

Idol, in awe of Cook and Jones's "certain, undeniable something" as a rhythm unit, found the experience "exhilarating", but reveals that singing Rotten's vocal lines pushed his body to the limit. "There's a picture of Johnny walking off-stage in Sweden holding his bollocks," he says. "I understand why now, it's really hard work to do what he does."

With the Roxy club duly booked, KLOS announced the show at 9am the day before, when listeners were able to enter a lottery to win free tickets. Curiously, the Pistols component of the "50:50" set list was culled mainly from the post-Rotten, *Rock'n'Roll Swindle* era, and even included the obscurity Black Leather. Was that, MOJO asks, to avoid stepping on Lydon's toes, as these were not 'his' songs?

"No," counters Cook. "It was just that we've never got to play those songs live. It was refreshing. But we did play God Save The Queen in New York and we may add other *Bollocks* songs to the set list this time round. We'll see."

"Those shows were good fun, just a laugh really, but the next ones should be better," says Jones, now long recovered from his 2019 heart surgery. "I'm in a much better place."

NATURALLY, ALL FOUR GEN SEXERS ARE THRILLED to make their 'proper' public debut with punk godfather Iggy Pop in July – Jones: "I remember him in my New York days, running around the Iroquois hotel out of his mind, wearing a harlequin suit" – though the ever-questioning guitarist is clearly anxious. Perhaps Gen Sex is more brittle than it outwardly appears.

"I'm not a fan of festivals," he grumbles, saying he'll enjoy the July 10 show at Wolverhampton Civic Hall more. Then his mood suddenly darkens. "To be honest, I'm so over playing rock'n'roll. You can print that. If we're having a laugh, sure, but if there are personality conflicts and it becomes a drag, then I'm too old to put up with that shit. If it stays being good fun, that's OK. I hope it does."

For Tony James, it's more about the longevity of the songs, of passing on punk's wisdom, energy and excitement to future generations – sex or otherwise. "When you go to the opera and see The Magic Flute, you don't expect to see Mozart in the band, do you?" he argues. "Music can go on for ever. I hope ours does."

In a few weeks' time, we'll see…

Sex BOMBS!

A DOZEN CLASSIC TUNES PRIMED TO MAKE GEN SEX'S SUMMER SETLISTS. BY PAT GILBERT.

READY STEADY GO

Generation X's third single, extolling the virtues of '60s youth culture and the titular TV show, is a firm favourite of Jones and opened both 2018 Gen Sex shows.

DANCING WITH MYSELF

With the original Gen X 1980 recording featuring Jones on guitar, and the song later becoming an Idol solo hit, it's inconceivable this careening rocker won't make the grade.

THE GREAT ROCK'N'ROLL SWINDLE

The title track of the 1980 Sex Pistols mockumentary, much loathed by Rotten and written after his departure, is thug-punk gold. Idol sings the guest vocalists' parts straight.

UNTOUCHABLES

A brave potential inclusion, this soft-rock schmaltzer from *Kiss Me Deadly* is the only other Gen X recording to feature Jones. Popular with all members, so it's a runner, we think.

HOLIDAYS IN THE SUN

Not performed at the Roxy and Chrome Hearts shows, but if the group need another *Bollocks* track to beef things up, this album highlight would be a powerful contender. So would Bodies.

WILD YOUTH

A Generation X signature tune, this '77 stomper might feel slightly ironic when belted out by pensionable old punkers, but it's a must-have inclusion.

KISS ME DEADLY

One of the new wave's masterpieces, this dynamic rocker, heavily influenced by The Who and Springsteen, will enable Paul Cook to flex his drumming chops.

NO ONE IS INNOCENT

The singalong of "Ronnie Biggs was doin' time, until 'e dun a bunk…" will bring tears of joy to Pistols fans, if rendered in its original knave-ish glory. Rotten would not approve.

LONELY BOY

A *Swindle* gem, this '50s rock'n'roll pastiche, given the Marshall-amp treatment, is Jones's calling card, naming his book and celebrating his hermetic tendencies.

KING ROCKER

When Ian Hunter produced Generation X's second LP, *Valley Of The Dolls*, he demanded a hit single. Idol/James retorted with this pummelling, air-punching classic.

SILLY THING

Sung by Cook on the *Swindle*, but with Jones's vocal on the '79 hit single, its original title 'Silly Cunt' will no doubt be heartily bellowed by audiences.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

Performed at the second Generation Sex show in 2018, this is a cert; but will the lyric, post-Coronation, become "God save the King"?

ENCORE: NO FUN

Jones exclusively revealed to MOJO his wish to join Iggy Pop at Crystal Palace for a finale of this Stooges cover – recorded in 1976 by the Pistols – with Glen Matlock playing bass. Iggy? Glen? You listening?

DON'T EXPECT:

Anarchy In The UK (Jones: "Every time I play that song I end up looking at my watch"); Friggin' In The Riggin' (Jones: "No, that's pantomime territory").

MOJO PRESENTS

Fifty years ago, the sound of liberation rang around southern Africa, as a generation of heavy, funky rock bands heralded a new political and musical era. At the forefront? Zambia's WITCH, surviving turmoil and tragedy to become cratedigger superstars in the 21st century. "We want to keep the Zamrock fire burning," they promise DAVID HUTCHEON.

Photography by **POONEH GHANA**

IT'S A HOT, DRY EVENING OUTSIDE A NIGHTCLUB ON ZAMBIA'S COPPERBELT, SOME TIME in 1974. A hand-decorated truck pulls up and six lanky hippies unfold themselves from its dark interior. Dressed in flares and cheesecloth shirts, their hair unkempt, the sextet distinguish themselves from the curious onlookers milling around by their oversized floppy hats and an air of stoned mischief-making. "Who are you?" asks a bold teen. One of the strangers turns, grinning. "We are The Witch," he roars, before pointing at the acronymic mission statement painted in large letters on the side of their tour bus, "and We Intend To Cause Havoc!"

As a long-awaited new LP by WITCH nears release, Emmanuel 'Jagari' Chanda is looking back on heady days when the Zamrock sound his group pioneered exploded from every transistor radio from Lusaka to Johannesburg. Half a century ago, he was the singer with The Witch; today, he is a septuagenarian gemstone miner who laughs at the chutzpah of his hell-raising youth, reflects on times and friends lost, and enthuses about the unexpected second chance that has come his way.

This summer sees the release of *Zango*, the first WITCH album in 39 years, and the first since cratediggers discovered their 1970s LPs and reissued them outside southern Africa. Rebooting the sounds of Deep Purple, Cream and James Brown for the Congolese kalindula bass, distorted guitars and drum patterns belonging to the country's 73 separate ethnic groups, funky hard-rock bands formed in Zambian social clubs at the most febrile time in African history. As politicians and guerrillas fought to throw off the shackles of colonialism, teenage owners of fuzzboxes and wah-wah pedals adapted foreign music to ➢

Pooneh Ghana

Welcome to Zamrock: the current WITCH line-up (clockwise from bottom left) Jacco Gardner, JJ Whitefield, Patrick Mwondela, Emmanuel 'Jagari' Chanda, Nico Mauskoviç and Stefan Lilov, Lake Perris, California, October 1, 2022; (below) new LP *Zango*, the band's first in 39 years.

Causing havoc: the floppy-hatted WITCH performing at Matero Stadium, Lusaka, Zambia, April 1973; (below left) on-stage in Lusaka on May 6, 2016, from 2021's WITCH: We Intend To Cause Havoc documentary; (below right) mind the grass!: band champion Rikki Ililonga of Musi-O-Tunya; (bottom) 1974 debut LP *Introduction*.

"WHEN WE WERE YOUNG, OUR NAME STOOD FOR 'WE INTEND TO CAUSE HAVOC.' TODAY, IT'S 'WE INTEND TO CREATE HARMONY.'"
Emmanuel 'Jagari' Chanda

their own ends, imbuing self-penned material with a raucous mix of optimism, liberty, rule-breaking and, yes, havoc.

IN 1964, WHEN THE NEWLY independent Republic of Zambia held its first elections, Chanda was just another music-obsessed 13-year-old. "People came to work in the mines from South Africa, Tanzania, Congo, Malawi, Zimbabwe [then known as Rhodesia]," he recalls, "and they brought their cultures with them. I was fascinated by traditional music, and a lot of it came from different countries. We'd see films from South Africa, with musicians like Spokes Mashiyane or the Dark City Sisters. At night we'd listen to Lourenço Marques Radio, a Portuguese station in Mozambique, and they would play the Top 50. There was a bookshop in town where you could read the Melody Maker."

Led by the authoritarian socialist Kenneth Kaunda, the Zambian government ruled that 95 per cent of music played on radio had to be locally produced. Like The Beatles' appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show, this was the cue for countless wannabe superstars to pick up guitars. Musi-O-Tunya – named after the Lozi name for the Victoria Falls ("thundering smoke") – were first out the block; The Black Souls, Ngozi Family and Peace followed. Chanda ditched plans to enlist in the army – "They wouldn't allow Afro hair" – and joined a band called Kingston Market, but there were disagreements over that name. "We tried other names, and the lead guitarist had a wah-wah pedal, the Footswitch, so we thought about calling ourselves that. Then we remembered there was someone called Dr Footswitch in a band, the Rave Five, so we became Switch for about 20 minutes, then dropped the S."

By 1972, the six-piece The Witch (as they were on their first two, self-released LPs, from 1972 and 1974) or WITCH (after the albums were reissued in 1974 on the Zambia Music Parlour label) had solidified around guitarists Chris 'Kims' Mbewe and John 'Music' Muma, bassist Gideon 'Giddy King' Mulenga, drummer Boidi 'Star MacBoyd' Sinkala and keyboard player Paul 'Jones' Mumba. Chanda's own nickname, 'Jagari', derived from his stage moves – like Jagger's – but nodded to jaggery (a dark brown sugar) and was Africanised in tribute to Nigerian politician Shehu Shagari.

"Most bands were managed by businessmen who owned the equipment and recruited and paid band members," the singer says. "By Zambian standards, however, we were successful and could survive on our income from live performances. The instruments were our own, our truck was our own, and eventually we started managing ourselves."

Introduction, the band's debut LP, was the first long-player by a Zambian rock act. Recorded in the studio where one of the mining companies produced documentaries about its work, it was self-released before the country had a functioning record industry. Chanda remembers flying to Kenya to collect 400 copies to sell at gigs. "I was just excited to be on a record, I think Zambians were excited to be able to buy something that was ours. They sold like hot cakes."

Those LPs sound rough and ready, like early Decca-era Stones, but if the guitars are from *Out Of Our Heads*, the rhythm section is from outer space. Jacco Gardner, the Dutch bassist who has been part of the resurrected band since 2016, explains: "For me, the significant thing is how the similarities and differences with Western progressive music interact in Zamrock. There are many progressive bands who experiment with syncopation, with polyrhythms, but with WITCH it is less calculated, it feels like it has come from the roots. It's cleverly composed but everyone is playing in a free-form way."

THE FLOODGATES OPENED AFTER *INTRODUCTION*. A live circuit spread through neighbouring countries, with countless bands ready to satisfy demand; labels sprang up to fill shelves with product. In 1975, WITCH released their best album, "*Lazy Bones!!*", but outside forces were already lining up to crush the Zambian success story. "Kenneth Kaunda freed us from the ingrained instinct that the colonial master will always be superior," explains Patrick Mwondela, who debuted as the band's keyboard player in 1979, "but the government embarked on a

Ian Enger, Sheldon Abba (3), Tim Spreng

Magic moment: (above) WITCH at their homecoming show, Lusaka, November 2021; (below) keyboard wizard Patrick Mwondela, Treefort Music Festival, March 2022.

programme it called Zambianisation, and it was done too aggressively. We lost expertise." When the international price of copper collapsed, Zambia's economy went with it.

"If the country is poor it's difficult for a musician to survive," adds Chanda. "People ask themselves: 'Do I buy a record or a bag of meal?' But it wasn't only the economy. What really caused trouble was that we were surrounded by countries hosting freedom fighters – Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa – and we were one of the front-line states. As refugees and fighters entered Zambia, foreign governments would follow them and bomb our country. The president declared street curfews. You had to be inside, so if you were playing a show you had to play all night. It was much easier to be a DJ than a musician."

The band laboured on, incorporating both disco and more African elements into their music, and were on the bill to support Bob Marley at Zimbabwe's independence-day celebrations in 1980, until instability there made safe travel impossible. By that point, however, Chanda had quit to become a teacher. Close to 1.5 million Zambians died when HIV/AIDS ravaged Africa in the 1980s, including all the other original members of WITCH. Musicians moved abroad to keep working. After two years writing jingles, Mwondela moved into information management in the NHS in Britain. Chanda became a university professor and chairman of Zambia's society for music copyright protection, and later a miner.

THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN WHERE the story ended. But in 2010, Chanda received a phone call from Rikki Ilolonga of Musi-O-Tunya, who had seen bootleg copies of WITCH albums in Denmark. More interestingly, as far as Chanda was concerned, Ilolonga knew Egon Alapatt of Now-Again Records, who was interested in releasing the albums legitimately. "I said a piece of bread is better than none," he grins, "and I knew who owned the copyrights." Next, an Italian fan, Gio Arlotta, arrived in Lusaka with plans to make a film about the band (WITCH: We Intend To Cause Havoc, released in 2021). Then, in 2014, the 50th anniversary of Zambia's independence, Mwondela suggested he and Chanda play a one-off concert in honour of their deceased colleagues. Requests soon started coming in for a European tour. With Arlotta's help, they were able to put a new version of WITCH together, take Zamrock on the road once more and record a new album in Lusaka that sounds uncannily like the 1970s classics.

"I never imagined this could happen," laughs Mwondela. "It was something I talked about at dinner tables, Yeah, that's what I used to do… Now I have to tell my employers I need summers off to tour."

"I will let destiny dictate," says Chanda, who has yet to give up working as a miner, in case precious stones bring greater reward than rock music, "but I have hope. My dream is to retire after building a recording studio and a school of music where I can share ideas with younger musicians, those who are willing. I would want to retire there and keep the Zamrock fire burning. When we were young, our name stood for 'We Intend To Cause Havoc.' Today, it's 'We Intend To Create Harmony.'"

TURN ME LUSAKA!

A Zamrock Top Five. Compiled by **David Hutcheon**.

WITCH
"Lazy Bones!!"
(Zambezi, 1975)

The third of five LPs recorded with Jagari in the '70s is WITCH at their most progressive, their love of both baroque folk and Deep Purple-like boogie to the fore. Strange Dream, Black Tears and the title track may be their finest moments.

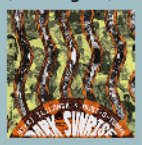
NGOZI FAMILY
Day Of Judgement
(Zambia Music Parlour, 1976)

The Family's first LP is the acme of African proto-punk, as unpolished and brutal as anything that would come out of the Lower East Side or King's Road in the subsequent 12 months. CD and double-LP reissues add 1975 singles. Essential.

CHRISSY ZEBBY TEMBO & NGOZI FAMILY
My Ancestors
(Chris Editions, 1976)

Led by guitarist Paul Ngozi, the Family were one of the busiest Zamrock acts. Having delivered *Day Of Judgement* they then turned the spotlight on drummer Tembo for this collection of stoner anthems. Trouble Maker is Black Sabbath-worthy.

RIKKI ILILONGA & MUSI-O-TUNYA
Dark Sunrise
(Now-Again, 2010)



Ililonga deserves props for both creating the first Zamrock outfit and making sure his peers get both credit and financial recompense 50 years on. This collects early singles, '75's *Wings Of Africa* and *Zambia* LPs, plus '76's *Sunshine Love*.

VARIOUS
Welcome To Zamrock!: Vols. 1 and 2
(Now-Again, 2017)

Now-Again's excavation of the archives has depended on unearthing extremely rare vinyl; much remains unreleased and some LPs were issued in multiple versions. These two doubles, then, are your best introduction to some of Africa's most unhinged pop music.

The floppy boot stomp: (left) Emmanuel 'Jagari' Chanda shows off his footwear, February 1975; Chanda creating harmony in DB Studios, Lusaka, November 2022.

nick drake: the making of a genius

Far from the work of a cloistered savant, nick drake's subtle songs were shaped by myriad influences, from Bach to Bert Jansch, Mose Allison to Randy Newman. Mining his interviews for a brand new authorised biography, richard morton jack tracks Drake's listening from cradle to tragic early grave and its impact on his art: "Nick was very conscious of what was happening."

Photograph by keith morris

NICK DRAKE'S FINAL TERM AT Marlborough College began on Tuesday, April 26, 1966. He returned to the Wiltshire boarding school with reluctance; almost 18, he had outgrown it and was more interested in his guitar than his impending A-levels. "The thought that in two months' time it'll be the end of Marlborough rather than just the end of term seems to make everything just about tolerable," he wrote to his parents.

He was at least sharing a study with a fellow guitarist, Mick Way, who had returned with a new purchase: the just-released debut album by John Renbourn. "Plainsong on that was the big one!" he says. "We thought Renbourn was the greatest."

Drake wasn't yet writing songs but had been an eager consumer of music all his life. "There was music going on in the family the whole time," as his mother, Molly, put it. Sitting at the family's grand piano in their home, Far Leys, in Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire, she herself composed songs in a variety of styles, from the humorous to the existential. She was greatly assisted in this by the fact that her husband, Rodney, had a weakness for gadgets.

"One day he staggered into the house after work, carrying what looked like an enormous green trunk," remembers Nick's older sister, Gabrielle. "It was an early reel-to-reel recording machine. It must have been one of the first pieces of domestic recording equipment on the market – real state-of-the-art stuff."

Born in June 1948, the infant Nick would improvise songs from his highchair and, recalled Molly, "Every time any music started, Nick would stand and conduct, and we always used to say, 'He's going to be a famous conductor!'"

He was a reluctant pianist to begin with, but soon came to enjoy it. He sang, too: aged seven he was cast as Ralph Rackstraw in a school production of Gilbert and Sullivan's H.M.S. Pinafore, and popular song continued to exert a pull on his imagination.

There was great excitement at his boarding prep school, Eagle House in Berkshire, because Britain's entry to the 1960 Eurovision Song Contest – the insipid Looking High, High, High – was written by the French master, John Watson. Smoothly performed by Bryan Johnson, it placed second, prompting Drake to write home: "[My friend Stapleton and I] have decided to go into the business when we grow up (in music)!"

POP WAS NOT FROWNED UPON AT FAR LEYS, and by 1960 Drake was developing critical faculties. He kept a log of his growing collection, together with laconic reviews. These ranged from Sammy Turner's I'd Be A Fool Again ("You already are!") and Johnny Shanly's Makin' Love To You ("Soppy and utterly wet"), to Floyd ➢

Getty/Keith Morris

Way to blue: Nick Drake looks beyond the London skyline, August 16, 1970.

> "He'd go into reveries and be off in a corner, doggedly practising. The word would be 'obsessive', even then."
> mick way

Robinson's Tattletale ("Not bad") and Neil Sedaka's Forty Winks Away ("Quite good"). His highest praise, however, was reserved for his mother. Under "Title Of Piece" he wrote "There are lots of them," and his critique read: "Very good indeed."

Upon entering Marlborough in January 1962, music was where Drake made the strongest initial impression on his peers. "There was a piano [in our house] and it was obvious straight away that he was very musical," says one school pal, Chris Rudkin, while another, Simon Crocker, adds: "He would easily pick out tunes we'd all heard on the radio. He clearly had an ear for music even aged 13."

As well as joining the choir (his voice still being an unbroken treble) he took up the clarinet. "I started learning the clarinet but didn't make much progress," continues Crocker. "Nick picked it up one day and effortlessly played it 10 times better than I could. I actually found it quite annoying."

Drake's teacher was the eccentric Ted Dowse, who had a profound impact on his musical development. With his encouragement, the youngster joined the school's wind orchestra and the Dance Band, which specialised in old standards – but as Beatlemania gathered momentum over the course of 1963, his enthusiasm for the strictures of classical music waned. "I've got the same old cow teaching me [piano] as I had before," he griped to his parents in October. "She's hurriedly put me onto the most lifeless piece that ever survived, and stamped out any enthusiasm that I had."

Much as Drake liked The Beatles, he was drawn towards more countercultural sounds. "Nick listened to modern American jazz, R&B, Delta blues, Odetta, Dylan," remembers another Marlborough friend, Jeremy Mason. "He broadened my musical horizons, there's no doubt about it."

In keeping with Drake's enthusiasm for modern jazz, his interest in the clarinet waned. "I told my music teacher about wanting to take up the sax, and he said it would be just about alright now, especially if I took up the alto," he wrote home in July 1964.

Drake and his peers were constantly in and out of each other's studies, chatting and listening to records. They were up on R&B, both of the US variety (through singles on the Piccadilly label) and the UK (Drake was especially keen on *The Five Faces Of Manfred Mann*, released that August). But his interest in music took a decisive turn in September 1964, when he was assigned a study with Mick Way.

FORTUITOUSLY, WAY HAD A CHEAP Spanish guitar – the first Drake is known to have handled. "I remember sitting down and teaching him C, A minor, F and G7th," says another pal, Dave Wright. "A few days later he was better at it than I was. He was a proper musician. He played by ear, and he was good."

Self-expression had never come easily to Drake, but now it had a ready outlet. Over the course of the Christmas term he spent as much time as he could playing Way's guitar, swiftly assimilating Bert Weedon's Play In A Day primer. Soon it was obvious that he needed a guitar of his own, so in December '64 he spent everything he had on a second-hand nylon-stringed classical, an Estruch, in the music shop in Marlborough High Street. His parents were horrified at the outlay – £13, around £200 today.

Blake's progress: key inspirations Peter, Paul & Mary and (above) Manfred Mann's debut.

Getty, Bridgeman Images/Julian Lloyd, © Bryter Music

That month saw the release of Davy Graham's *Folk, Blues And Beyond*, which set new standards for aspiring guitarists, but it's unlikely Drake cottoned onto it right away. Instead, he continued to assimilate popular standards. Over the Christmas holidays his local friend Jeremy Harmer came to Far Leys with his own guitar, and the pair learned Stewball, All My Trials, 500 Miles, Early Mornin' Rain and Freight Train from Peter, Paul & Mary records. The following Easter, Drake accompanied the Harmers on a skiing holiday in Verbier, Switzerland, and both boys took their guitars. "In the evenings we would sit in the hotel bar and try to entertain the guests, singing pop and folk songs in the Peter, Paul & Mary vein," says Harmer.

Over the course of 1965, says Mick Way, "Nick was concentrating on the guitar to the exclusion of almost anything else. I was still strumming away on open chords but he had started developing his own style." The boys' tastes expanded to encompass the blues: "We had a crappy old Dansette and I had *Back Country Blues* by Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, which we played a lot. He also liked Robert Johnson. Complicated fingerpicking is what we liked and tried to emulate – things that were hard to break down. We played together quite a bit, but then he'd go into reveries and be off in a corner, doggedly practising and not communicating. He just got his head down until he'd got it. The word would be 'obsessive', even then."

Drake was also keeping his hand in on the sax, and formed a jazz quartet with Adrian Hutton on piano, Jeremy Harmer on string bass and Simon Crocker on drums. "We play rather more sophisticated stuff like Summertime and Misty, and a few vocals like Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter," he wrote to his parents. "Just your sort of vintage, really!"

Oldies, however, held dwindling appeal. In March the Graham Bond Organisation had released their first album, *The Sound Of '65*, whose innovative blend of jazz and R&B electrified Drake and his friends. It also drew them to Soho, where they watched Georgie Fame, Chris Farlowe, Inez And Charlie Foxx and others at the Flamingo or the Marquee.

Donovan, The Beatles (especially Yesterday), Paul Simon, even an album of whale song, competed for time on the Dansette, and on October 29, Drake and Jeremy Mason caught Graham Bond at the Manor House Hotel in north London. Their heroes did not disappoint. "I can remember Nick standing with a cigarette, watching Ginger Baker doing a drum solo on Camels And Elephants," recalls Mason, "and he was so impressed he'd poured a pint of beer all the way down his front before he noticed."

DESPITE POOR ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS, Drake was aiming for a place at Cambridge University to read English. A special timetable was devised that allowed him to duck lessons and read a wide range of canonical literature in his study. He especially enjoyed Romantic poetry, with William Blake making a particular impression, but was more likely to be found playing his guitar. His housemaster, Dennis Silk, recalled repeatedly telling him: "Drake, for God's sake put that bloody instrument away!"

Bored of school, in February 1966 Drake decided to form an R&B group, which Simon Crocker – its drummer – jokily named The Perfumed Gardeners, after the ancient erotic text. Though haphazard, their few performances impressed their peers. As Jeremy Mason says of

Places to be: (clockwise from left) Nick Drake wraps up, Selborne, Hampshire, 1967; 1969 debut LP *Five Leaves Left*; relaxing with a cigarette, circa 1971; young Nick with mother Molly, London, 1957; Nick favourites The Graham Bond Organisation have a squeeze; Donovan on Ready Steady Go!, January 21, 1965; second album *Bryter Layter* (1971).

their final show in June: "Nick suddenly put down his saxophone, went over to the piano and on his own played Parchman Farm [by Mose Allison] – and it was an absolute tour-de-force."

Drake left school in July 1966. That summer was rife with innovations in pop, with *Pet Sounds*, *Revolver*, *Sunshine Superman* and *The Incredible String Band* reflecting a thrilling expansion of ideas and possibilities. Drake assimilated them all, and, more importantly for his own creative development, he tentatively began to smoke dope.

In September he again invested all the money he had – just over £50 – on a new guitar, a Levin LS-18. He spent much of the autumn hunched over it at Far Leys, though his focus was supposedly on getting into Cambridge. When Fitzwilliam College offered him a place starting in October 1967, he had almost a year to fill, so he enrolled on a course at the University of Aix-Marseilles as of February, together with Jeremy Mason and Simon Crocker.

Crocker packed a Dansette to enliven their pokey quarters. "I bought Donovan's *Mellow Yellow* album and Nick played it incessantly and taught himself some of the songs on it. We also had the *Bert And John* album, and solo albums by [Jansch and Renbourn] which Nick must have picked up there." Mason recalls them listening to Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, as well as John Mayall and Jefferson Airplane, whose *Surrealistic Pillow* had just ➢

been released; Drake would likely have been struck by Jorma Kaukonen's dazzling solo guitar showcase Embryonic Journey.

CROCKER AND MASON WERE SLOWLY TWIGGING that Drake's relentless practising was yielding original material. It's not clear what his first song was, but in the weeks ahead he wrote several: Leaving Me Behind, Strange Meeting II, Bird Flew By, Rain (songs that would appear on the posthumous *Time Of No Reply* and *Family Tree* collections) and others. Upon arrival he wrote home, indicating an interest in studying Camus, existentialism and Surrealist poetry, but swiftly abandoned his course in favour of a month in Morocco with newly made friends.

"Moroccan music [has] scored a major hit with me," he wrote home, and it began to be reflected in his relentless guitar playing. One evening Drake and his friends got wind of the fact that The Rolling Stones were also in Marrakesh. Well aware of how talented he was, the outgoing Rick Charkin managed to gain him an audience in their hotel, La Mamounia. "They were bombed out of their minds, yet clearly impressed by Nick," says Julian Raby, noting Mick Jagger's particular interest. "At the end of the encounter Mick said to him, 'You must come and see us when you're back in London,' which I doubt he said to everyone."

Drake wasn't a die-hard Stones fan, but this was an important mark of approbation and a clear encouragement to continue taking his music seriously. Back in Aix in May he took up a friend's suggestion of making a home recording. The result gives an excellent account of his repertoire: a combination of well-worn US standards (Get Together; Cocaine Blues; If You Leave Me Pretty Momma), recent numbers by Bob Dylan, Bert Jansch and Jackson C. Frank, one by a friend (Robin Frederick's Been Smoking So Long) and a couple of fine originals, delivered with fluency and confidence – Leaving Me Behind and Strange Meeting II.

Drake did a little busking around Aix and St Tropez, and spent part of the summer playing in a Paris bar, but really he wanted to see whether his songs could make him any sort of professional headway in London. To that end he sent a demo tape out to various contacts, whilst hanging out with more new friends. Far from partying and clubbing, says Sophia Ryde, their gang spent the long summer nights "sitting around, smoking dope and listening to records". West Coast rock was hip, and Nick was especially keen on The Byrds' *Fifth Dimension* and *Younger Than Yesterday* and The Doors' debut.

Shortly after going up to Fitzwilliam in October, Drake splashed a large chunk of his funds for the year ahead on another guitar upgrade: an expensive new Martin D-28. Sunk in communion with it, it took a while for him to make friends in Cambridge. One, Brian Wells, quickly discovered that "we both liked a number of the same things, from *Blonde On Blonde* to Vaughan Williams… Donovan's *Sunshine Superman* album was on constantly, and Nick loved Tim Buckley (especially I Never Asked To Be Your Mountain) and The Doors (especially Jim Morrison)."

They went to local gigs by Family, the Incredible String Band and others, but Drake largely found university a waste of time, preferring to beetle to London whenever possible, hanging with Sophia Ryde, her boyfriend Alex Henderson, and Ben Laycock, to whom he was happy to pass his prized new Martin.

"The problem was," says Laycock, "it was really hard to play if you weren't Nick. He had huge, strong hands, and had the strings higher off the frets than normal. One evening he played Time Has Told Me, and at the end we all said, 'Wow!'"

Nick's picks: (above) The 5th Dimension's *The Magic Garden* (1967) was an influence on Drake, as was (left) Randy Newman, (below) Donovan's *Sunshine Superman* (1966) and (bottom) French composer Gabriel Fauré; (opposite page) Drake in contemplative mood, August 16, 1970; last LP *Pink Moon* (1972); Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, 1964; Johann Sebastian Bach.

Getty/Keith Morris, Getty (5)

ON THE INVITATION OF some friends, on December 21, 1967, Drake played at a charity show at London's Roundhouse, on an intimidating bill including Pentangle, fronted by his heroes Jansch and Renbourn. The occasion proved momentous: his short spot led to his meeting the American producer Joe Boyd, co-founder of Witchseason Productions. Stunned by Drake's talent, he offered to record him and suggested he think in terms of arranging his songs, in the manner of Leonard Cohen's newly released debut.

Back in Cambridge in January, Drake asked another undergraduate, Robert Kirby, if he'd be interested in working on arrangements with him. Kirby was struck by the breadth of Drake's knowledge of folk and blues guitarists: "He used to talk about some quite esoteric '40s and '50s players. He knew their music inside out." But Drake's tastes were even more wide-ranging, Kirby noted: "We talked about a fair bit of classical music – I seem to remember Fauré's Requiem was one that we mentioned. Nick was quite well up on 19th century French literature – very well up. I think that was how the conversation got on to Fauré and the string sounds there."

Kirby was also an entrée to an esoteric musical salon at Caius College, a group who gathered in the room of the charismatic Mike Weissmann. "He had this amazing and eclectic collection of records," explains another member of the group, Pete Russell. "He would play Bach by the Leonhardt-Consort followed by Jaki Byard, William Byrd juxtaposed with Motown. He was our mentor."

Over the summer Drake listened to Donovan's *A Gift From A Flower To A Garden*, especially liking the carefree Skip-A-Long Sam, but American underground music tended to dominate his

listening. In September he went back to the Roundhouse to see The Doors and Jefferson Airplane with friends. "The Weight by The Band was being played over the PA before the gig started, and Nick was insistent that I listen to it," remembers Ben Laycock. "He said, 'This is absolutely the best thing around.'"

Several of his friends remember him being much taken by Song For Our Ancestors, the atmospheric opening instrumental on the Steve Miller Band's newly released *Sailor*. He would sit them down and urge them to listen to it – and The Doors' Spanish Caravan – on headphones. Unbeknownst to most in his circle, at the same time he was in the thick of recording his own album.

Back at Cambridge he befriended another talented singer-guitarist, Paul Wheeler. Wheeler noticed that Drake was "very conscious of what was happening – he'd know if there was some new fashion in clothes or in music or in the arts or the cinema and stuff like that – 'Have you seen this? Have you heard that? Have you heard what so-and-so's doing?' – and he would often be ahead of the game. So for all his detachment and dreaminess he was actually on the ball a lot of the time."

Wheeler also became friends with Weissmann and says, "Mike, Nick and I had a thing about going to evensong in Caius – we would sit in the gallery at the back. I also remember going to a Gustav Leonhardt concert in London with Mike and Nick. Leonhardt was a hero of ours, through Mike. For us it was like seeing Brian Wilson."

"Nick put down his saxophone, went over to the piano and played Parchman Farm. It was an absolute tour-de-force."
Jeremy Mason

It was Wheeler who introduced Drake to Mark Lancaster, the 'artist in residence' at King's College. The older Lancaster had already been a strong influence on Bryan Ferry as an art teacher at Newcastle University and turned Drake onto recent albums including *Roots* by the Everly Brothers and Randy Newman's debut.

The latter would become a favourite, especially the slow, heartfelt I Think It's Going To Rain Today, which featured a delicate string arrangement of just the sort Drake had been striving for with Kirby. Newman didn't fall neatly into any contemporary category and suggested an appealing model for Drake's career, being fundamentally a writer whose work was widely covered, obviating the need for touring or self-publicity. The album became part of the soundtrack to his second year at Cambridge, as did Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*.

DRAKE'S ACADEMIC performance remained perfunctory, and his friends don't recall him reading for pleasure. As his debut album neared release in July 1969, his spare time was – as ever – largely devoted to playing his guitar. He attended the Isle Of Wight Festival in August, principally to see Dylan in action (and was disappointed by him), but his summer was dominated by indecision over his future at Cambridge. Following a triumphant support slot for Fairport Convention at the Royal ➢

≺ Festival Hall in September, he resolved to drop out in order to focus fully on making a second album and developing a live profile.

Based in London, reliant on gigs and a small weekly advance for subsistence, record-buying and gig-going became luxuries Drake could ill-afford. He was, however, steeped in the music being made by his contemporaries on the Witchseason roster – Fairport, the Incredible String Band, John and Beverley Martyn and others – and shared stages with acts as diverse as Genesis, Atomic Rooster, the Third Ear Band and The Humblebums.

In the spring of 1970 he told Jackie magazine that he admired The Beatles, Donovan and Debussy, but stopped short of calling them influences. When Richard Thompson bumped into him on the tube they discussed Debussy and Delius – but they never hung out. The closest they came was when Drake saw fellow Witchseason musicians at the shabby Holland Park flat of the company's fixer, Bob Squire. There they'd play cards, smoke pot and listen to Jimmy Smith, Brother Jack McDuff, Lord Buckley and Dr. John.

Few were invited to Drake's flat in Hampstead, but Robert Kirby was a notable exception, as they worked on arrangements for what would become *Bryter Layter*. Kirby remembered Motown, *Astral Weeks*, *Pet Sounds* and The 5th Dimension's *The Magic Garden* – written and arranged by Jimmy Webb – being influences, not least on the instrumentals Drake was determined to include, while the underground DJ Jeff Dexter – who encountered Drake at the Martyns' flat – recalls him admiring Neil Young's 1969 solo debut, both sides of which open with instrumentals.

With *Bryter Layter* completed, Drake continued to spend much of his time alone, smoking dope, questioning his decision to leave Cambridge and brooding over the numerous delays to his new album's completion and release. Although it wasn't immediately obvious to his friends and family, his mental health was in decline; he later dated the start of his struggle with depression to this period in Hampstead.

Not seeing any benefit in gigging, in the summer of 1970 he ceased to do so altogether, and became steadily less engaged with the world around him, including the latest developments in pop. However, Paul Wheeler remembers him being very struck by Stephen Stills's 4+20 – from *Déjà Vu*, issued in March – which provided a model of sorts for the guitar-and-voice album he was contemplating, and which eventually took shape as *Pink Moon* the following year.

EVICTED FROM HIS LONDON BASE – WHICH WAS being redeveloped – in the spring of 1971 Drake moved back to Far Leys, taking his records with him. He had never been an autodidact – beyond the guitar, at least – but he surprised his parents by ordering a new set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, payable in instalments, which

hanging on a star

Four songs from the new Nick Drake tribute LP *The Endless Coloured Ways*, by the artists who cover them.

fly

(original on Bryter Layter, Island, 1971)

PHILIP SELWAY (RADIOHEAD): I wanted to cover Fly because there is a home demo recorded in his room that really spoke to me; you can hear birdsong, and you feel Nick's right in front of you performing – and it's such a beautiful melody. I was also thinking of Joni Mitchell's orchestral LP of her older songs [*Travelogue*, 2002], where her voice is much lower, so I imagined Nick was still alive and reimagining his own material, so my version is in a much lower key. You just want to do the best for his songs. If I had to boil my record collection down to one artist, it would be Nick – I think everybody has somebody who speaks to you, and for you, and I feel that about him. But then his music does seem to inspire this deep attachment. He wasn't the music *du jour* at the time, but once you get beyond the tastemakers and prevalent genres of the day, you hear the quality of the work, the intimacy and the vulnerability of his expression. There's this whole community of Nick Drake lovers out there, but it's not like we've come together in a forum; we've all just found that deep connection to the music individually.

poor boy

(original on Bryter Layter, Island, 1971)

NADIA REID: I was just reflecting that it was a year ago that we recorded it. We were still in somewhat of a lockdown in New Zealand. And, to be honest, I didn't really think too much about how I would approach the song. I just wanted to get my band in the room, find a good key for me to sing it in, and kind of just let the magic pour out! Obviously, I know the *Bryter Layter* version really well – Nick Drake gets under your skin, doesn't he? I think I read somewhere that he wrote it about Leonard Cohen – like he was kind of taking the piss out of a certain kind of singer-songwriter's self-pity. The song certainly brought a couple of people to mind!

I was given *Pink Moon* as a teenager, when I was possibly in my last year of high school. I hadn't heard music quite like that before, so understated and intimate and kind of dark in places. It was definitely one of the records that I really held onto during tumultuous times. I don't think we should shy away from that darkness. Nick Drake offers that release, or that connection through song that makes people feel less alone.

three hours

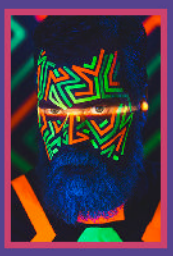
(original on Five Leaves Left, Island, 1969)

JOHN PARISH: I was asked to sing a duet with Aldous Harding, so we chose Three Hours because the lyric is more abstract, whilst other songs of Nick's are too personal to carry more than one voice, or even a background harmony. Three Hours is quite a driving track, both from the words and the guitar part, so I gave it a classic driving, motorik beat.

It's only with time that people have recognised how unique Nick was. His guitar and voice are so central and defined that it works no matter how they're arranged, and all three of his albums are different in that respect. My favourite is *Pink Moon*. It wasn't until I heard a remastered vinyl reissue that I was struck by quite how brilliant it is: a perfect rendition of acoustic guitar and voice. It became a benchmark record for me, in regard to recording artists in a sparse way. It's got nothing to do with technical excellence, such as microphone placement or room ambience; it's about getting a feeling, an indefinable quality that becomes so engaging that it's impossible to turn away from.

day is done

(original on Five Leaves Left, Island, 1969)



JOHN GRANT: This song was tough for me, because how do you approach something that's perfect? That chord structure for me is heaven. That's what my heart is shaped like. And I really connect to his story – I wonder if he felt invisible too. "And then, when the party's through/ Seems so very sad for you/Didn't do the things you meant to do/Now, there's no time to start anew" – those lines speak to my heart.

I was introduced to his music in the '90s but it took me a long time to get into him, because he was like an accusation. He was himself in a way I was incapable of being at the time. Day Is Done, Three Hours, Fruit Tree, River Man – the lyrics, the chord progressions and the orchestrations… I mean, holy fuck. It's getting people to think about things that they don't want to think about, but in this exquisitely beautiful way. It helps you look at these things without entering the abyss.

As told to Martin Aston and Danny Eccleston

The Endless Coloured Ways: The Songs Of Nick Drake is out July 7 on Chrysalis.

Guitar man: (clockwise from left) Drake with strings, February 19, 1971; Nico's *Desertshore* (1970); Beverley and John Martyn, 1969; composer Claude Debussy; Drake and Jeremy Mason in Amiens, 1966; (opposite page) Drake was especially keen on The Byrds' *Fifth Dimension* (1966).

> "The Stones were bombed out of their minds, yet clearly impressed by Nick. Jagger said to him, 'You must come and see us when you're back in London.'"
> Julian raby

he kept, along with its accompanying bookcase, in the music room at Far Leys.

It would be reductive to attribute the onset of his depression solely to the commercial failure of his two albums, but their low sales were hugely demoralising. Drake wasn't arrogant, but his friends concur that he held himself to very high standards and was well aware of how good they were. He had been widely assured that they would make him a star: he didn't aspire to wealth or fame, but the sense that they were in fact being released into a vacuum was crushing.

By the time he recorded *Pink Moon* in October 1971 he had abandoned the more broadly appealing sound of *Bryter Layter*, and the album showed Drake as he was: vulnerable, confused, exposed. It was released to rave reviews and dismal sales in February 1972; in the ensuing weeks he had a major nervous breakdown and was hospitalised.

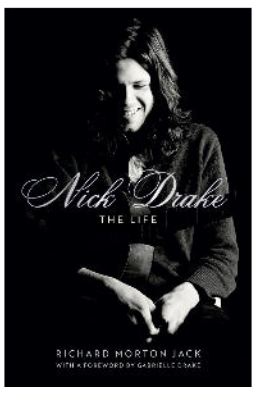
Drake's illness defined the rest of his life. He saw various doctors and was prescribed an assortment of medicines, but never engaged consistently with attempts to treat him. Increasingly unwell and uncommunicative, he passed long hours alone in the music room, intermittently listening to music or playing guitar and piano, but sharing almost nothing of his activities with his family or friends.

Much of his time was spent reading, in his favoured orange armchair. Books he tackled included a history of Europe, Tolstoy's War And Peace, novels by Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene, a compendium of horror stories, the Oxford Musical Companion and his trusty Encyclopaedia Britannica.

He also watched a lot of TV, often tuning into music coverage, whether opera or the Old Grey Whistle Test, and especially appreciated a March 1973 BBC documentary entitled Man Of Letters, about the simple, fulfilling life of a postman in rural Yorkshire. He also enjoyed comedy: even on his lowest form he was heard to laugh at Benny Hill, Mike Yarwood, The Two Ronnies or Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em.

Memories of his musical enthusiasms from 1971 onwards are fragmentary; friends variously remember his admiration for Joni Mitchell's *Blue*, Carly Simon's *No Secrets* and Jim Croce, but he bought few LPs (one being *Tubular Bells* by Mike Oldfield). His father's diary sometimes noted his listening: Mahler's songs during November 1972, Nico's *Desertshore* (co-produced by Joe Boyd) over Christmas 1973; occasionally his own albums. Mostly, however, Drake listened to classical music, the soundtrack to his childhood, whether on the radio or record-player: Satie, Debussy, Bach.

Despite consistent efforts to reawaken his muse, by late 1974 Drake was despairing of ever being able to muster enough material to complete another album. Unable to sleep during the cold and rainy night of November 25, he wandered downstairs, put on his trusty headphones and listened to the LP of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos he'd bought in happier times in Aix one last time. He then returned upstairs, and – seemingly on impulse – swallowed the contents of a bottle of Tryptizol (one of his prescribed medicines), shrugged off his dressing gown and lay on his bed.



Nick Drake: The Life by Richard Morton Jack, is published by John Murray on June 8. Richard talks Nick Drake with Joe Boyd and guests at Rough Trade East on June 6.

Tony Evans/Getty, Getty (2), Hordur Sveinsson, Michelle Henning, Alex Lovell-Smith, © Simon Crocker

The popstars are in the field: The Teardrop Explodes take a break from recording at Bearshank Lodge studios, Oundle, April 1981, (from left) Alfie Agius, Julian Cope, Gary Dwyer, Troy Tate, Jeff Hammer.

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES ACCEPT THEIR REWARD

Careering out of Liverpool's post-punk scene, The Teardrop Explodes and Orphic pin-up JULIAN COPE looked set for hugeness when existential piledriver Reward stormed the Top 10 in March 1981. Yet their fame-year of escape, adventure and psychedelic colours nosedived when heroic second LP *Wilder* tanked. "It was mad fun, and everyone was involved," recall members and affiliates, of supporting Queen, playing Macca at pool and tripping on Top Of The Pops. And then? "Disaster."

Tom Sheehan

Interviews by IAN HARRISON • Portrait by TOM SHEEHAN

Bent out of shape: Julian Cope faces up, 1980; (right, above) The Teardrop Explodes in 1980 (from left) Alan Gill, David Balfe, Dwyer, Cope; (below) the '82 touring Teardrops (clockwise from left) Ronnie François, Tate, Balfe, Luke Tunney, Ted Emmett, Dwyer, Cope.

"I WAS TOTALLY, MASSIVELY IN FAVOUR OF POP HITS."

DAVE BALFE

Julian Cope: The first time we did Top Of The Pops [for Reward, on February 19, 1981] it was everything we'd ever dreamed of since we were kids. And we had to take acid on Top Of The Pops, and be in the middle of a trip, because who the fuck wants to be on Top Of The Pops? Fuck that! But we *desperately* wanted to be on it. That's the great duality of human beings, isn't it?

David Balfe: I had a very complicated relationship with The Teardrop Explodes. I started out as the [Zoo] record label head with Bill Drummond, then I arranged gigs, I was the manager, and eventually stepped in as keyboard player. We'd got a guy called Alan Gill in on guitar, and one day at my flat in Liverpool he was doodling this really good riff on my grandad's piano. I said, "Let's do that with big trumpets", and what we called the soul beat, and it just really worked. I was out of the band when they roped me in to do Top Of The Pops when Reward was a big hit. I took acid and mimed playing trumpet, off my nut.

Clive Langer: Reward was so simple and exciting, it just jumped out, one of those records that made itself very quickly.

Mick Houghton: Their debut album *Kilimanjaro* [October 1980] had been indifferently received and the band was going nowhere. Reward being a hit came out of the blue. It had a great video; lots of energy, driven by a rampant Julian, and it captured the Liverpool scene [cast members included ex-Teardrops, a Bunnyman and other Mersey faces] and local rivalries at a crossroads. I think [Teardrop Explodes' record label] Mercury were hugely relieved.

Dave Bates: I predicted it would take off and it did. They actually refused to do Top Of The Pops unless everybody took acid, me included. It was Julian's idea of having mad fun, and everyone's gonna be involved. After Reward they went from South Bank Poly to 1,000, 2,000 people a night.

CL: Then they re-released the previous single, Treason, and that was a [Number 18, May '81] hit.

MH: Julian was everywhere for a few months in 1981. They appeared to be up there with The Police or Duran Duran. Doing Patches and Jackie, Julian would have been in his polite and friendly, middle-class boy mode. He knew it wouldn't last and he wasn't driven by any great desire for fame.

DBalfe: I was totally, massively in favour of pop hits. We kind of warred because I was much more pragmatic, shall we say, and scheming, where Julian was much more flying by the seat of his pants and full of wild adventure. When he got that flying jacket and his slightly bouffant hair style, kind of by accident, he looked like a dead good-looking perfect pop star, for six to nine months. Then he started wearing a Wee Willy Winkie-type nightshirt. I think the rest of the group regretted that he didn't play the image side of it better and longer.

DBates: Julian should have let us put out Ha Ha I'm Drowning as a single [the label released it without telling the band, and later withdrew it]. If we had released it, we would have had another massive hit, which he was avoiding. When I went to talk to him about it, when they were touring, he just went nuts, shoved me aside and ran out of the dressing room. Which was awkward, because we actually lived together at that point.

DBalfe: When I met him, Julian didn't take drugs. It was when Alan arrived that he started smoking dope, and then we started dropping acid, and he kind of picked up that ball and ran with it. [His 1994 Teardrop memoir] Head-On is extremely entertaining, but… he'd never let the truth stand in the way of a good story, and he'd often combine and exaggerate things. Like, I think the most we'd have a trip would be two or three times a month. Rehearsing and going for egg and chips don't get written up to the same extent.

JC: One of the reviews of Head-On said, "Considering he's taken so much acid, he's got a great memory." And I thought , Well, what was really bullshit is that 'if you remember the '60s you weren't there' Rolling Stone magazine thing… the whole point of what an artist is, you have a repository of experiences. Even if you were off your head, you have psychic arteries that you can travel down and get back to them.

DBalfe: I've kind of got the irrepressible urge to tell the boring truth, but don't let me puncture the myth. And I love being the legend [in Head-On, Cope refers to Balfe as a "fucking bread-head", a "twat" and a "total bastard"]. I keep on meeting musicians who go, [horrified] "Oh, you're Dave Balfe", as if I'm fucking Mephistopheles, like they couldn't believe I didn't have red lights coming out of my eyes.

DBates: Julian was a great salesman. When we were living together, in Marylebone, he sat me down and made me listen to Scott Walker. It was when he was putting the *Fire Escape In The Sky* [subtitled *The Godlike Genius Of Scott Walker*] compilation together for Zoo. The look on his face holding it was equal to him putting out his own record, that's how proud he was. Later, when I signed Scott [to Fontana in the '90s], I was telling him about Julian, and he knew all about him. Having known both of them, there's a lot of similarities between Scott and Julian.

CL: When they did Passionate Friend, it got to 22 or something [Number 25, October 1981]. Maybe they'd lost a bit of momentum, but [second LP] *Wilder* was a really good, fun, interesting record to make. Julian had met Dorian [Beslity, his American soon-to-be wife] and she was in the studio quite a bit when she was in England. There's a couple of things I've done and you just know it's good – I see it as a special album.

DBalfe: It made me pretty miserable when they toured without me, but when I wangled my way back in to record the second album, it was one of the happiest days of my life. We recorded in AIR Studios on Oxford Circus, I was playing pool with Paul McCartney, George Martin was wandering past, and we stayed in this hotel that would become our home-from-home, the Columbia.

JC: There was a special Teardrop irritant that we used in the Columbia hotel. The pre-programmed tune on the Casio VL-Tone [mini-keyboard], if you played 'auto play' and 'one key play', it would go (*hums maddening jingle*) 'dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun der-der-der-deeer!' I used to do that for, like, four or five hours at a time and drive everyone insane. Heavy.

DBates: It was a lot going on for Julian at that time – with breaking up with his [first] wife, with the pressure, with falling out with members of the band, his relationship with his parents… I was with him in AIR the night he was doing the vocal

Avalon.red (7), Shutterstock (2), George Chin/IconicPix

Disappearing act: (left) playing Passionate Friend (with Balfe on bass) on Top Of The Pops, October 1, 1981; (right) Cope fronting the ill-fated final Teardrops incarnation, October 1982; (above) 45 sleeves and *Wilder* (1981).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

● **Julian Cope (vocals)**

● **David Balfe (keyboards, manager)**

● **Dave Bates (A&R, Phonogram Records)**

● **Clive Langer (producer)**

● **Mick Houghton (publicist)**

● **Gary Dwyer (drums)**

● **Troy Tate (guitar)**

for The Great Dominions, which is fucking amazing. He did one or two takes, crying his eyes out, just absolutely emotionally wrought, and when he finished he ran out of the studio and disappeared for the night. There were stunning songs on *Wilder*, probably a couple of tracks we could have done without, and two singles more would have made all the difference. And I regret putting out Colours Fly Away [Number 54 in November 1981].

MH: The hits had dried up, and it was common knowledge that *Wilder* [Number 29, December '81] had flopped too. Bill [Drummond]'s thinking behind Club Zoo was, the Teardrops needed to become a band again, not the Julian Cope Show.

DBalfe: Instead of going on another fucking tour, we did about six weeks [Nov-Dec '81] in this great little, almost derelict club in Liverpool. That was Club Zoo. It kind of worked and it kind of didn't. I felt the group needed to rebuild itself both psychologically and musically, but I do think we were pulling in different directions that weren't ever quite being resolved.

MH: The band was really on a groove. Ronnie François was a fantastic bass player and freed everybody up. On-stage it was definitely happening, but Julian had alienated a lot of people in Liverpool. Plus, the feeling was, what were they doing playing such a small venue? It was also badly promoted. I was the only person at the first one.

DBalfe: I first came across Courtney [Love] when the Teardrops were doing a couple of gigs in Dublin in late '81 – a strange, dishevelled-looking teenager. She unexpectedly appeared in Liverpool weeks later. I would have bet all I had that there was absolutely no chance that she would have one day become a star, though she certainly didn't lack confidence or pushiness. We ended up doing this massive tour afterwards, we did [from January to May '82] Australia, New Zealand and America and Europe and England and Europe and England again. We lost a lot of money on that tour and we were all a bit worn out by the end of it.

Troy Tate: The only way you can enjoy it is by doing all those rock'n'roll things… like Gary running round hotels with nothing on, banging on doors… the weirdest thing of all was when, apparently, one of the Grateful Dead, of all people, gave Cope some highly potent LSD. For a couple of days him and Gary were completely out of their brains, sticking marshmallows on the roof of the van.

MH: It was no secret that the band had racked up serious debts, and when they did shows with Queen in summer '82, it was just a sticking plaster. I went to the show at the Milton Keynes Bowl [on June 5, 1982] but can't remember too much beyond Julian deliberately trying to antagonise the audience. I did go backstage, which had the atmosphere of a disastrous wake. Troy and Ronnie must have known their days were numbered. It felt to me like it was all over from the start of 1982.

DBalfe: We tried doing a third album. I saw the '80s as what they ended up being, and wanted to go electronic. Julian was into guitars and the '60s. The last Teardrop tour [in October 1982] was a disaster. To my great regret I persuaded Julian and Gary that we should slim down to a three-piece, using backing tapes with this incredibly elaborate stage set-up and it really didn't work. Before we went back to finish the album, [on November 15, 1982] Julian called it a day.

Gary Dwyer: I was just a shit-kicker from a council estate and I went out there and done it and I'm dead proud of it. I love it. I remember the day Copey said he wanted to go home, and I just said, Yeah.

DBates: With the Teardrops it's the potential that's the sad part. We've gone from one happy camper van from Merseyside to fractured pieces all over the road. I was devastated when it ended.

MH: The Teardrop Explodes had used up all their credibility. I put the statement out that the band was splitting up. Julian's statement invited a backlash by saying he saw what he did next as "an opportunity for gross self-indulgence". There was no great outcry. No eulogy over their passing, no inquest as to why.

DBalfe: I've suggested the Teardrops getting back together to Julian a couple of times. About 10 years ago, quite seriously, I said, "Look, if we don't do it now we probably never will." And I think we could really have some fun doing gigs and maybe trying to do some new material. He wasn't into it, and I think that's admirable.

JC: Because The Teardrop Explodes will never re-form, because everybody has re-formed, it's actually allowed me to look at The Teardrop Explodes and go, they weren't half bad, actually. I listened to a bunch of tapes from Cargo Studios, and they were all manky, and they didn't play, and I thought, Holy shit, they're old enough to be relics. I started going through it and I thought, This is good.

So much of it is, I met this woman when she was 19, all those years ago. She was the right one. Had I not met Dorian? I could be really dramatic and go, I'd probably be dead, but more than that, I'd probably be boring. I'd probably be retracing my steps with two original members and saying that my singing was better than ever. And just looking at an inferior version of me when I was 23. Ⓜ

The Teardrop Explodes box set Culture Bunker 1978-1982 is out on June 2 via UMR/EMI. Order at thesoundofvinyl.com. Julian Cope was speaking in 2004. Gary Dwyer quote from Kilimanjaro Deluxe Edition (Mercury). Troy Tate quote from Sounds, 1981.

Nature boys: Love in Los Angeles, July 1967 (from left) Michael Stuart-Mare, Ken Forssi, Arthur Lee, Bryan MacLean and Johnny Echols.

LOVE HURTS

Divine, deranged, divided: it's taken 50 years and change for LOVE's JOHNNY ECHOLS to make peace with his doomed band's ageless legacy. In 2023, the Book of Love is reopening, but not before the guitarist confronts its more contentious passages. "I won't sugar-coat it," he tells ANDREW PERRY. "There's nothing to hide."

SCHOOLMATES AT SUSAN Miller Dorsey High School in West Los Angeles, Arthur Lee and Johnny Echols were thick as thieves, with everything in common bar one: Johnny Echols lived to make music; Arthur Lee could barely play a note.

"Then Arthur saw our band playing at an assembly, and all the attention we were getting from the girls," Echols remembers, "and he asked if he could join. We started him on congas. Later on, we noticed that Arthur had a real rapport with the audience. Even though he wasn't a musician *per se*, he'd get up and entertain people. Then we found out he could sing, and he became our vocalist, more and more out front."

Echols pauses: "Arthur has a personality where he takes over things, whereas mine is more passive. I prefer being in the background."

The dynamic cast a long shadow over the band Echols and Lee would eventually christen Love, and its legacy. At the group's mid-'60s peak, in a striped hipster suit and brandishing a double-necked electric guitar, Echols cut a super-cool figure. But the legend of the band's ascent and culmination in 1967 masterpiece *Forever Changes* has always been dominated by Lee.

The making of *Forever Changes* tore the band apart, scuppering its success but for cult acclaim. The inner fracture is often attributed to Lee's battle for supremacy with Bryan MacLean, the bumptious uptown folk rocker who wanted more of his own compositions included. Echols, now 75, has outlived both to curate Love's catalogue and renewed activities – including an upcoming UK tour – and he's keen to supplant that binary portrayal with a more collective narrative.

"For years, I didn't talk," he admits from his home in the hills overlooking LA, "but now I'd like my family to know the truth, and to give people the facts. I won't sugar-coat it. There's nothing to hide."

Love snatched defeat from the jaws of victory not once – in 1967 – but twice. In the early '00s, after Echols joined Lee and his long-serving Love band, AKA Baby Lemonade, for victory laps performing *Forever Changes* in all its ➢ Getty

orchestral majesty, Lee contracted acute myeloid leukaemia and in 2006 he passed away.

Along their troubled path, there has been betrayal and bitterness, addiction and imprisonment, but also redemption. While Lee was one of the most problematic characters in rock history, it's telling that both Echols and Baby Lemonade guitarist Mike Randle still talk of him in the present tense, with an air of wonder and affection. As Randle confides, "I don't see Arthur as being gone, man – he's everywhere!"

Echols, meanwhile, repeatedly flags up the serendipity which brought Love together and allowed them to sculpt three wonderful records rightly adored across six decades. But no, he won't sugar-coat it.

"We fought tooth and nail," he says, of their shared dream. "We wanted it, but we did everything we could to destroy it."

ARTHUR TAYLOR LEE AND JOHN MARSHALL Echols were each born in John Gaston Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, two years apart, and lived a couple of streets away from each other. They also shared, in their ethnicity, African-American, Choctaw and Irish bloodlines.

"Arthur's mother and my grandmother were best friends," says Echols, "and they'd travel around together hearing the different groups [in the '40s] – my grandmother used to say they were basically groupies. Arthur's father was a trumpet player in [swing saxophonist] Jimmie Lunceford's orchestra."

As a single parent, Lee's mother Agnes relocated with him to West LA when Arthur was five, but when Echols' parents made the same move two years later they found themselves in a house on 27th Street, two doors down from Agnes and Arthur, and the kids' friendship was rekindled.

When Echols started an R&B band aged 13 with fellow Dorsey pupil and future keyboard legend Billy Preston, Lee would join, despite rudimentary skills on an unpromising instrument: the accordion. Pursuing gospel gigs, Preston quit, leaving Echols and Lee, as The L.A.G.'s, to secure a residency at the California Club, a chitlin' circuit redoubt where they'd back travelling bluesmen including B.B. King and ZZ Hill, and where young Jimmy James (later Jimi Hendrix; *see panel, p61*) passed through. Echols excelled, touring Europe with Little Richard, and almost landed a spot with James Brown, until Brown's manager discovered the guitarist was only 15.

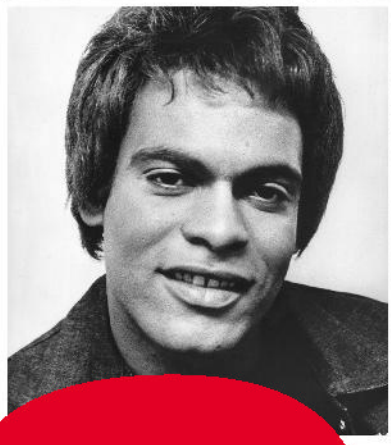
"LOVE FOUGHT TOOTH AND NAIL. WE WANTED IT, BUT WE DID EVERYTHING WE COULD TO DESTROY IT."
Johnny Echols

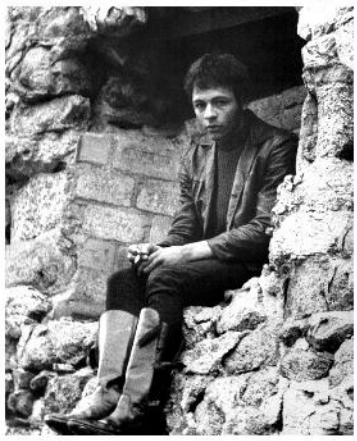
Allegiances were fluid: Lee had another group on the go in Reno, but when he dropped by to see Echols's moonlight operation The Grass Roots at Brave New World – a gay bar newly frequented by Hollywood's folk rock scene – he took one look at the hip-and-happening crowd and insinuated himself again.

"It was only a couple of weeks later that we met Bryan," says Echols. MacLean was brought up in Beverly Hills, but that summer of '65 had been slumming it as a roadie for The Byrds. Within another few days, he was sitting in at Brave New World. "Immediately we knew – this is the guy!" Echols recalls. "Overnight, we went from an R&B covers band to writing different kinds of stuff, like the folk rock and show-tunes that Bryan was into."

With MacLean came what the LA Times called the 'Sherwood Forest' crowd and, says Echols, "David Crosby and Neil Young would sit in with us. We had this song, John Lee Hooker, which was basically a two-chord jam, so anybody who was cool could come up and, 'Hey, it's in E!' Sometimes we'd play it the whole night, because no one was doing anything like it."

Another trademark was Echols' Stratosphere Twin double-neck, acquired in 1964, used on-stage to flip between folk rock 12-string and regular six-string licks in a heartbeat. Meanwhile, Lee's sartorial flamboyance – "he would wear a fur coat on-stage, even in the summer," says Echols – was all about getting noticed, as was the extraordinary new band name, Love. But what Lee brought to their songwriting was more nebulous.



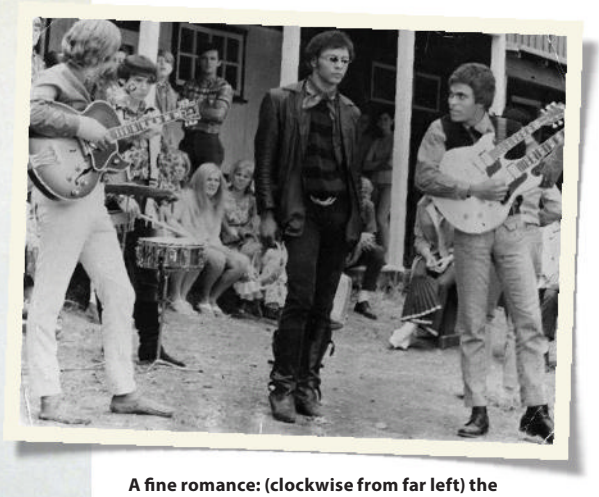


"Arthur was a wordsmith and a poet, but he couldn't play," says Echols. "He would walk around singing these melodies, often imitating other artists – like one time I remember it was a Bee Gees tune – and Bryan and I and Kenny [Forssi, bassist] would put together the music to go with it. We would play a thousand different things, and Arthur had this amazing gift: he always knew which one was right for the song."

Thus, Echols maintains, Love's singular magic arose from its five-way membership: Forssi had served in Florida's The Surfaris, of Wipeout fame, while sticksman Alban 'Snoopy' Pfisterer wasn't even a drummer, having shifted over from keys to fill in for Don Conka, who no-showed due to a heroin habit (later immortalised in debut album track Signed DC and its assertion that "My soul belongs to the dealer"). Byrdsy harmonies, Broadway songcraft, British Invasion rowdiness, surf groove and vintage R&B all fed into a unique sound which, Echols believes, "we could never have sought out – it just came together from the various backgrounds."

That singular chemistry was, however, volatile. "Bryan was clinically bipolar," Echols reveals, "and from the day we met was taking lithium for it. Arthur was bipolar, too, but wouldn't take the medication, so he'd go from top-of-the-world to 30 seconds later being down-down-down. Bryan would have peaks and troughs,

Getty (5). Courtesy www.psychedelicbabymag.com



A fine romance: (clockwise from far left) the seven-piece *Da Capo*-era Love at the Whisky A Go Go, West Hollywood, 1967 (from left) Forssi, MacLean, Stuart-Ware, Alban 'Snoopy' Pfisterer, Lee, Tjay Cantrelli and Echols; steps between *Da Capo* and *Forever Changes* (from left) Echols, MacLean, Forssi, Lee and Pfisterer; al fresco Love in 1967 (from left) MacLean, Stuart-Ware, Lee and Echols; in October '67, prior to *Forever Changes*' release; alone again, Lee and Echols.

and I'm also a person that can be depressed – I can crawl up into a little corner and just want to melt – so it's amazing to me that we made as much music as we did."

AFTER SIGNING WITH JAC HOLZMAN'S FOLK/JAZZ imprint Elektra, Love set out to capture the raw live set that'd been slaying LA's clubs. In that period of contractual rip-offs and manipulation, they'd chosen to self-manage, which, given their youthful arrogance and underlying mental health issues, made dealings with their new boss doubly frictional. Echols says they found Holzman overbearing in the studio, and when the band heard *Love*, released in March 1966, they complained they'd been toned down. "It didn't take off the way we'd hoped," says Echols, "and everything went downhill from there."

Undaunted, they lived the dissolute dream at a Los Feliz chateau once owned by Hungarian horror icon Bela Lugosi. Like The Monkees on premium-strength LSD, their capers up there with Crosby, Janis Joplin and Jefferson Airplane were notoriously debauched.

"We lived hard and fast," Echols says today, "and experimented with drugs, because we felt that our time was limited, that the military were going to grab us and send us off to Vietnam."

Those desperate, acid-ravaged energies manifested on 7 And 7 Is, an explosive standalone 45 later included on that November's *Da Capo* LP. For the album sessions, they'd acquired "finesse drummer" Michael Stuart-Ware, but rivalry between Lee and MacLean escalated, as the latter pushed for more than his one inclusion, the beatific Orange Skies, and was duly enraged when Lee elected to fill side two with a 19-minute take on John Lee Hooker, now retitled Revelation.

"Bryan was very intelligent, but he had this outgoing personality that could grate on you," says Echols, "especially when you have two people like that. Arthur wants to be the centre of attention, then Bryan wants it. They're at loggerheads, but they need each other. Bryan is Arthur's muse, but he doesn't like Bryan – but he *loves* Bryan. I loved Bryan, too, but I didn't *like* him because he would take over and not allow you to have your space, and he'd sulk if he didn't get his way. His songs were fantastic, but like Arthur's they needed help."

Having conquered California, Love needed to put themselves about, but they scarcely toured beyond the West Coast – an insularity often attributed to Lee's paranoia.

"That's nonsense," counters Echols. "We didn't tour because we couldn't. If you were a black group or a white group, you could play places. If you were a mixed-race group, there were problems. Clubs [in middle America] would have staggered admission, where blacks went in at one point and whites at another, but we wouldn't stand for that. Being young and headstrong we probably insulted some people and burned a few bridges, and that tied us to California."

Echols laughs ruefully when he recalls how Love further "shot ourselves in the ass" by introducing Elektra to their Caucasian buddies The Doors, who were soon roving all over America, leaving Love deprioritised and "neutered" back home.

It was against this backdrop of career despondency that *Forever Changes* was created. Initial sessions in June '67 were notoriously chaotic: when Elektra reneged on an agreement to record a double album incorporating MacLean and Echols songs, "Bryan staged a minor mutiny, so they brought in some of the Wrecking Crew [AKA Phil Spector's studio band], to lay down the basic tracks."

Only two songs were completed that way, as Love took a few weeks to get their act together, and eventually delivered the stipulated single LP, with string arranger David Angel helping Lee realise the orchestration and Mariachi brass he heard in his head. ➢

Leading off the record, MacLean's Alone Again Or was emblematic of their team approach. "The way Bryan wrote it, there were banjos playing the opening. Neither of us played banjo, so we rented some, and then realised it sounded like crap! We went on lunch break and were about to dismiss the song altogether, then after lunch, I'm playing these Spanish riffs to warm up my fingers, and David says, 'Why don't we do that on Bryan's song?' David put it together – he should've gotten a writer's credit."

Echols himself was pursuing studies at LA's Conservatory of Music, and what he calls the "folk rock fugue" of *Forever Changes* benefited from the sophisticated harmonic suspensions he'd learnt there. The songs he wanted to chip in were "blues-jazz-fusion-orientated," but, unlike MacLean, who later released his unused compositions on 1997's *Ifyoubelievein*, he never completed them.

It was towards the end of making *Forever Changes* that hard drugs entered the picture.

"I call it 'self-medicating'," Echols reflects. "I was a heroin addict, as was Bryan. Arthur was very much into cocaine and used copious amounts. It happened, I think, because we knew that *Forever Changes* was a monumental thing in our lives, and in the end it just brought us down. For my part, I'm feeling betrayed because Arthur gets to do all his songs, and the one song of mine that was going to be on the album got nixed to make room for Old Man, another song of Bryan's."

After all that battling, on release in November '67 the album only reached Number 152 in the US. Love limped on.

"The straw that broke the camel's back was when I found out that Bryan had surreptitiously worked out a deal with Elektra to release a solo album," says Echols. "That was their incentive for him to come back and finish *Forever Changes*. After that, I wanted the whole thing done. It was over."

WITHIN WEEKS, LEE HAD REJOINED HIS RENO group, who played on 1969's *Four Sail*. His old school friend "went into a downward spiral". Barely 20, Echols was "a junkie, for maybe two years", his habit continuing even after he moved to New York in an effort to end it. He eventually had an epiphany while watching a TV channel's closedown monologue from a priest offering free rehab, and called the number. "I stayed there for three months," he says, "and I've been clean ever since."

Echols started a family and became a successful session guitarist for film, TV and recording artists, and occasionally played alongside Shuggie Otis's son, Lucky, in blues clubs. "I didn't even want to hear about Love," he says.

He had, however, reconciled with Lee. Throughout the '70s they'd meet twice or three times a year, whenever one or other was visiting the opposite coast. "We talked about friends and family, never the group," he adds. "We'd tried to put it back together a couple of times, but Arthur and I resented Bryan totally. Plus, Arthur thought he was the genius that the critics now said he was, and sharing the spotlight was something I don't think he knew how to do."

As Lee rattled through umpteen line-ups of Love, he enjoyed more infamy than tangible success, and by the early '90s he was, says Echols, "in a very dark place – addicted to crack cocaine, and he wouldn't show up for gigs if he couldn't get the drugs."

In April 1993, he enlisted LA neo-psychedelicists Baby Lemonade as his backing group, and they were instrumental in Lee turning things around. Says Echols, "They're straight-arrow people, and Arthur couldn't go on one of his bipolar things, and try and pull them apart in order to get his way. They came as a team, and he had to toe the line and play the music."

Burgeoning interest in Love's 1966-68 legacy, as UK indie bands including Primal Scream and Shack eulogised their 'perfect pop', prompted Warners sudsidiary Rhino to put together 1995's *Love Story* box set.

"Rhino offered us substantial money to come together and tour," Echols reveals, "and we'd decided to do it. We'd grown up: Bryan had become deeply involved in religion and was an entirely different person. Kenny had become this right-wing gun nut. Everybody had become who they were supposed to be, I guess, and

First among equals: Jimi Hendrix feeling the love in 1967.

MAY THIS BE LOVE

JIMI HENDRIX and ARTHUR LEE: a Love story, recounted by Johnny Echols.

"RATHER THAN SENDING HIS CLOTHES TO THE CLEANERS, JIMI WOULD SPRAY THEM WITH RIGHT GUARD. HE REEKED OF THE STUFF." JOHNNY ECHOLS

I FIRST MET Jimi in 1964 at the California Club, where I was in the house band. At that time, he was just Jimmy James, playing with the Isley Brothers, and he'd come down to audition with the O'Jays. A little later, Billy Preston, Little Richard and I went to a recording session, which was the first time I really talked to him. He was a quiet, introspective person, and I would've called him a so-so guitar player, a journeyman.

We weren't making a lot of money, going from club to club, and rather than sending his clothes to the cleaners, Jimi would spray them with Right Guard – you'd know he was coming from 20 feet away because he reeked of the stuff.

Jimi really hit it off with Arthur, and Arthur got him to play on an R&B single he cut with Rosa Lee Brooks [in 1965], called My Diary. A couple of years later, in San Francisco, a friend told us about this incredible guitar player called Jimi Hendrix, and we obviously didn't put it together it was the same guy. A few nights later [on July 2, 1967], we went to the Whisky A Go Go to check him out, and Arthur goes, "Man, that's the dude that played with us!"

Before, he wore cardigans and skinny ties, with the processed hair. Now he's in full hippy regalia, with the fringed jacket and the boots, and he's on-stage using this Cry Baby wah-wah pedal, which I'd tried and couldn't figure out, and he was doing feedback, distortion, stuff guitarists just didn't do. Incredible!

When he was on break, Arthur and I went to the dressing room, and we chatted. I said, Damn, what happened? Did you make a trip to the crossroads? I was kind of playing with him. He smiled and said, 'No, man, I made a trip to the woodshed!' Meaning that he had just practised and practised.

Jimi was an acquaintance of mine, but he was a friend of Arthur's. After Love had gone their separate ways, Jimi and Arthur recorded together again [three tracks at London's Olympic Studios in March '70, including The Everlasting First from the reconstituted Love's *False Start*], and they were talking about putting together a supergroup with Stevie Winwood as the vocalist, Buddy Miles on drums, and some other players, but it never got any further because Jimi passed away.

As told to Andrew Perry

Love resurrection: (clockwise from above) Love with Arthur Lee, Mike Randle, David Green and Dave Chapple at The Robin, Wolverhampton, June 29, 2004; Johnny Echols at The Robin, April 6, 2005; Arthur in Amsterdam, 2002; Johnny Echols today.

"ARTHUR WAS CLEAN, AND HE WAS FINALLY GETTING THE MEDICATION HE NEEDED, SO HE WAS ON AN EVEN KEEL."
Johnny Echols

we were able to get along."

Those negotiations were ongoing, until a late-night incident at Lee's LA apartment resulted in seven drugs and firearms charges, and ultimately saw the singer sentenced to 12 years in prison.

"Everyone says Arthur got a raw deal," says Echols today, "but he did what they said he did. He came to the door with a gun, and he was convicted for being an ex-felon with a gun."

Lee ultimately served five and a half years but, according to Mike Randle, emerged from prison a changed man, seeing "a bigger picture" for his music, and showing a new motivation to realise it. In the interim, the 1960s line-up re-formation had been scuppered by the passing of MacLean, then Forssi. Instead, Lee stuck by Baby Lemonade, working out a fully orchestrated *Forever Changes* show, with Echols back on guitar.

"Arthur was clean," says Echols, "and he was finally getting the medication he needed, so he was on an even keel. Before, it was always me-me-me, but he called me up and said, 'You're just as responsible for this as I am, and you should share it with me.' He wasn't trying to manipulate me. He saw now what it could be, if he just did his part."

The shows were universally praised, with Lee in great shape vocally and spiritually. Love reached a career high at a sold-out Royal Festival Hall in London on January 15, 2003, where The Red Telephone's "they're locking them up today" passage felt poignant in a way that its 22-year-old author could never have imagined. "I want my freedom," Arthur roared at the climax, his '60s dream revived in the new millennium.

FINALLY, IT LOOKED AS IF LEE WAS GETTING HIS DUE, with Echols in tow. Picking up the Hall Of Fame gong at 2004's MOJO Honours List ceremony, Arthur handed this writer a demo CD, with a title, Love On Earth Must Be, which he claimed he'd been given in a divine visitation. Randle says there were as many as 10 tracks recorded (soon to be released by Stateside psych imprint High Moon Records), and everything was moving forward positively. What could go wrong?

In early '05, MOJO reported on a new Love that Arthur had convened in Memphis, including Jack Yarber of the Oblivians, and rumours circulated that Arthur had once again self-harmed on the brink of success, firing Baby Lemonade – the band on whose loyalty it was founded.

The truth was more mundane. Says Echols, "His mother had passed away and left him a house in Memphis, so rather than paying $6,000 a month for renting a place here in Los Angeles, he could go back to Memphis and live for free. But what I didn't know was that he was sick." Eventually, one of the Memphis musicians, drummer Greg Roberson, let slip that he'd taken Lee to hospital for leukaemia treatment.

"I went there to hang with him, and we talked," says Echols, smiling. "Arthur is so resilient, he'd managed to pick himself up so many times, that I fully expected he would do so again. The last time I saw him, I realised, no, he's not going to make it through this time – he was down to around 80 or 90 pounds – but I didn't want him to see it in my face."

Lee passed on August 3, 2006. But The Love Band endures, playing regularly on the West Coast, intermittently further afield, and occasionally performing *Forever Changes* orchestrally. To this day, there's one song Echols can't participate in. "When we get to Old Man," he says, "I sit down on my stool. It's hard to say what's going on in my head, but I just won't play it."

His face brightens. Echols believes he's had a happier life by not experiencing skyscraping fame. "I don't believe people are built to be lionised," he says, citing his close amigo David Crosby as someone who became "embittered and paranoid" through celebrity. "To me, navigating through everything that went on in Love and coming out whole at the end – that in itself is success."

He smiles contentedly, up in the hills above LA. "And I have the music to look back on, and say, Wow, I did that."

The Love Band featuring Johnny Echols tour the UK June 30-July 15.

Alamy (2), James Robert Sharp, Getty (2)

That Touch Of Mink

Pimp style, tough love, and the romance of New York, Paris and New Orleans infused the extraordinary rock, roots and soul of Willy DeVille. But as Sylvie Simmons discovers, bad luck, hard drugs, and tragic deaths cast long shadows across his life and music. "I constantly have this kind of hunger," he confessed, "an emptiness."

Photograph: Ebet Roberts

LOS ANGELES, JULY 1977. It's the day after Mink DeVille's first show in LA – interview day – and mainman Willy DeVille is nowhere to be found. He went out to buy cigarettes, the publicist says. Since an hour's gone by, you might suspect he's scoring something stronger. Finally he saunters in, stiletto-thin, black hair slicked into a huge pompadour, a soul patch and pencil-thin moustache. Heavy gold rings hang from his ears and there are snakeskin boots on his feet. Beside him is a petite woman with a jet black beehive and a tattoo on her shoulder that says "Willy". This is Susan 'Toots' Berle, Willy's wife, who watches over him like a bouncer. Toots is famous for pulling knives on soundmen who don't get Willy's volume just-so, or any woman who looks at him a little too long. Backstage last night at the Whisky A Go Go, Toots was watching my every move.

In the interview Willy DeVille talks about the music he grew up on – Ben E King, Bobby Blue Bland, Little Willie John – and says how much he hates punk, the scene in which he came to prominence. "I don't wear safety pins," he says. "My music's not intellectual, it's very emotional, it's the heart." Reviews of his band's 1977 debut – self-titled in the US; *Cabretta* in the UK – compared him with Van Morrison and Mick Jagger, but DeVille is having none of it. "I know Jagger and he knows I can sing better than him," he declares. "Van Morrison? I could beat him at soul singing." Lighting a cigarette from the one he just finished he adds, "I will sing any of them under the table…"

Indeed, Willy DeVille had a hell of a voice: part blues, R&B and Spanish Harlem, Lou Reed, The Drifters and Ronettes. He sounded like New York, in all its grit and glory. He also had the songs, the look, the passion and the arrogance that might have secured greater stardom if hard luck and hard drugs hadn't held him back. A new documentary, Heaven Stood Still: The Incarnations Of Willy DeVille, has done the rounds at European film festivals and is showing in select theatres in the US. A streaming deal is being sought. Maybe, 14 years after his death, Willy DeVille will finally get the attention he deserved.

BORN IN STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT IN 1950, Billy Borsay (as he was then) moved to New York with his parents when he was 14. Quitting school as soon as he could, he started haunting the city's folk clubs. He got the occasional solo gig but mostly he got nowhere. After hooking up with Toots Berle, the pair tried London, then San Francisco, where he formed a band: Billy De Sade & The Marquis, regulars on the leather-bar circuit.

"Things," DeVille told me, "weren't going too well." Then, leafing through a week-old copy of the Village Voice at the City Lights book shop, he spotted an ad: CBGB, a former biker bar on the Bowery in Lower Manhattan, was looking to book musicians to play original material. Willy showed it to the band. They should audition, he said. "I knew that if everybody just had a little faith in me I could take them there. One guy said, 'I'm not going'" – but the rest of them piled into their old white van and headed east.

The band now had a new name, Mink DeVille. Half fur coat, half luxury Cadillac, big-shot pimp props from a New York of another age. Billy Borsay became Willy DeVille. With a line-up that ➢

Ebet Roberts/Getty

New York serenade: Willy DeVille with his wife Toots, New York City, April 17, 1977.

settled on guitarist Louie X Erlanger, bassist Ruben Siquenza, keyboard player Ritch Colbert and T.R. 'Manfred' Allen on drums, Mink DeVille landed a regular gig from 1975-77 as one of CBGB's house bands, earning $50 a night. At the outset, CBGB owner Hilly Kristal would double-bill them with the Ramones – or, as Willy called them, "pussies", which was known to end in a fight. They also played shows with Blondie, taking it in turns to headline.

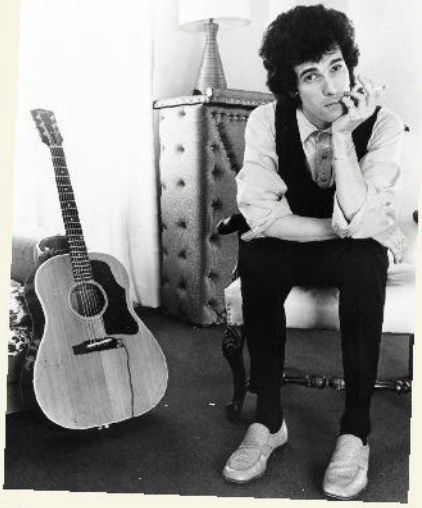
Recalls Clem Burke today, "They definitely stood out musically. I would also bet that Willy's sense of style had an influence on Johnny Thunders and Bruce Springsteen. I remember Willy had an electric guitar covered in leopard skin. With their understanding of the roots of rock'n'roll, blues and R&B they were kind of a New York City version of Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers: musical excellence delivered in great style."

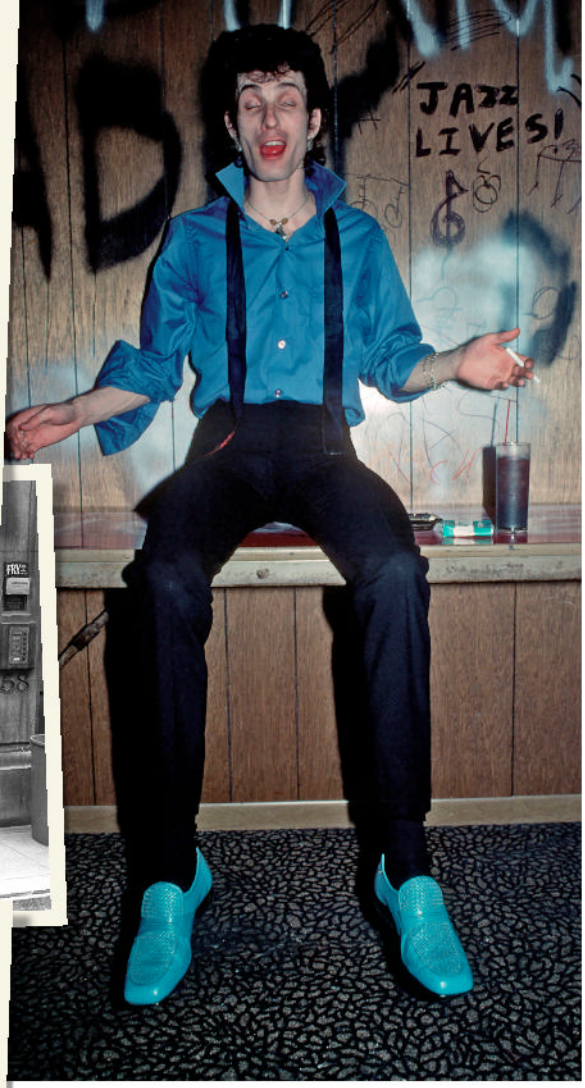
The regular CBGB gigs helped attract a manager, Chris Evans. Evans also ran a musicians classified ads paper, which helped Mink DeVille secure more gigs. The band moved into his loft, rehearsed in another loft down the street, and spent nights playing the club circuit of CBGB, Mother and Max's Kansas City. Their big break came with a 1976 compilation album, *Live At CBGB's*. Recorded over three nights on a shoestring budget, it included three Mink DeVille songs, one of which – a cover of Moon Martin's Cadillac Walk – started getting airplay in New York.

Another band on the compilation was Robert Gordon's Tuff Darts. Ben Edmonds, an A&R rep for Capitol Records, had taken a liking to them, but the night he saw them play, Mink DeVille were also on the bill and he liked them even more. "Tuff Darts were a really good band," concedes Louie Erlanger. "But I think that Willy and us had a unique thing going on, so that's why Ben signed us to Capitol."

Edmonds was also a rock journalist – a former editor of Creem and in later years a writer for MOJO. A champion of The Stooges and MC5, he'd been drawn to Mink DeVille's hard-edged rock as much as the bluesy soul and Latino side. "Unlike so many of the other bands on the crowded CBGB/Max's circuit," Edmonds wrote, "who seemed to relegate New York to a backdrop for their emulations of the three or four prototype outfits, Mink DeVille drew direct inspiration from the city itself."

Willy's romance with New York ran deep. His tough and tender songs, most of them about love or drugs or both, evoked everything from doo-wop to





Loose connections: (this page, above) Willy DeVille relaxing backstage in Los Angeles, July 1977; (left, from top) always a vacancy at Hotel DeVille – Willy in 1977; the Mink DeVille band dress to impress in London, 1977 (from left) T.R. 'Manfred' Allen (drums), Ruben Siquenza (bass), Louie X Erlanger (hidden, guitar), Bobby Leonards (keyboards), Willy DeVille; the formidable Toots DeVille keeps Willy close, San Francisco, 1977; Willy with producer Jack Nitzsche at CBGB, New York, May 12, 1977; *Return To Magenta* LP; (opposite page) Willy DeVille in 1978; (inset) Willy on-stage, 1981.

West Side Story. There was also a grandeur to his ballads, so Edmonds figured that the perfect producer would be Jack Nitzsche, who'd arranged many of Phil Spector's epic productions. Renting a New York studio, Edmonds had the band record a four-song demo which he played to Nitzsche. When Nitzsche heard DeVille sing Otis Redding's These Arms Of Mine, he told Edmonds to stop the tape and said, "When do we start?"

"I DIDN'T KNOW WHO Jack Nitzsche was," Willy DeVille admitted during our 1977 interview. "This friend of mine said, 'You fool, he's the guy who did all the stuff that you love by The Crystals and The Ronettes.' We met and we got drunk and then we went straight in and made the album in about three weeks. We weren't even sure what was going on it. Jack said, 'Willy, do you want to be a punk asshole all your life? You gotta sing. You're a great singer. Just sing.'

"There was a big emotional thing when it was over. The engineer, who was like a robot, had tears rolling down his face. He and Jack kind of looked at each other – and Jack said,

Getty (5), Ebet Roberts, Shutterstock

"Van Morrison? I could beat him at soul singing. I will sing any of them under the table." Willy DeVille

'I haven't seen one of these in a long time.'"

Mink DeVille's debut barely scraped into the US Top 200, but they had a hit single in the UK with the infectious, macho Spanish Stroll. Capitol flew them to London to tour with Dr. Feelgood. They threw them a big party – The Clash were among the guests – and another one at EMI, where Willy met Marc Bolan.

"Bolan was a little bit high and dancing around," remembers Erlanger. "Everyone was having a good time and Willy was going to go for a ride with him to some other party. But somebody from Capitol told Willy, 'You really should stay here because that's what people are here for.' That night was when Bolan had his car accident. The next day they told us he was dead."

Back in the US, Mink DeVille toured the US as part of a package with Nick Lowe and Elvis Costello. DeVille didn't like opening for Elvis: "The dude had no right going around by the name of The King," he sneered. A second album, *Return To Magenta*, was also produced by Nitzsche, this time in LA, with Nitzsche adding strings to exquisite ballads I Broke That Promise and Guardian Angel, and hiring members of the Wrecking Crew to augment other songs. The album linernotes were written by Doc Pomus, the great songsmith who'd penned hits for The Drifters and the original Elvis. Pomus called their music "timeless" and Willy "one of the greats". He wrote, "Mink DeVille knows the truth of a city street and the courage in a ghetto love song." Before long DeVille and Pomus were writing songs together.

The first fruit of their collaboration was Just To Walk That Little Girl Home – the standout ballad on Mink Deville's third album, *Le Chat Bleu* (1980). "Willy and I were in Doc Pomus's apartment on West 72nd Street in Manhattan," recalls keyboardist Kenny Margolis, a recent recruit to the band. "Doc was in a wheelchair but he could get about. He had a little Wurlitzer electric piano that I played and Willy brought an acoustic guitar. Willy had all the music for the song but no lyrics. Doc wanted to give it some sort of Spanish theme so he started out with the line, 'It's closing time at Roberto's cafe,' but Willy said no. Doc thought about it for a few minutes and said, 'I've got it: 'In that nowhere cafe,' and Willy said, 'Yes, that's it!'"

There would be two more DeVille/Pomus co-writes on *Le Chat Bleu*: That World Outside and You Just Keep Holding On. "Willy was in awe of Doc," says Margolis. "And I think Doc saw in Willy a link to the past when Doc was young and coming up with those songs that influenced Willy's music."

LE CHAT BLEU WAS RECORDED IN NEW YORK and Paris – Willy wanted the album to have a "French sound". He and Toots adored Edith Piaf and insisted on working with Piaf's strings arranger Jean-Claude Petit. But Mink DeVille's most beautiful and sophisticated album was the hardest to make. With Nitzsche dealing with a number of personal problems – including charges of violence against his actress girlfriend, Carrie Snodgress – Steve Douglas, who played sax on the first two albums, produced. Willy had problems too; he and Toots decided to hire a new manager without telling their old one, so there was a lawsuit looming. Meanwhile, Capitol Records were fretting about the time it was taking and the bills they were ➢

running up. Willy didn't help; studios would be booked in Paris and he'd invariably show up late while the clock ran. Increasingly, Willy and Toots were living in a bubble that excluded everyone and everything except art and heroin.

By the time *Le Chat Bleu* was done Mink DeVille had lost its last original member, Erlanger. They had also lost their record deal. With no idea what to do with the album's orchestrated New York-Paris fusion, Capitol shelved it. EMI Paris came to the rescue, giving it a European release. And thanks to good reviews from rock critics who heard it on import, Capitol eventually released it in the US. *Le Chat Bleu* made the Top 5 of Rolling Stone's best albums of 1980 but didn't even touch the US charts. "We thought we had done something great," Willy said, "and Capitol dropped us."

Fortunately, Mink DeVille had a fan in Ahmet Ertegun. The president of Atlantic Records saw them play at the Savoy in New York and went backstage. "He sat down with Willy," says drummer Thommy Price, "and said, 'I want you in my office on Monday morning, we've got to talk,' and we were signed to Atlantic."

The honeymoon was not a long one. Neither 1981's *Coup De Grâce* (for which Nitzsche returned) nor *Where Angels Fear To Tread* (1983) sold. And Mink DeVille fared little better at Polydor, for whom they recorded the group's 1985 swan song *Sportin' Life*, although European hit single Italian Shoes oddly featured backing vocals by three members of Def Leppard, who were recording in the same Dutch studio.

Willy's bedfellows were getting stranger. His first album credited to Willy DeVille, 1987's *Miracle*, was made in London with Mark Knopfler producing: Knopfler's French wife Lourdes Salomon, a big Mink DeVille fan, put him up to it. The Dire Straits man played guitar on every track and co-wrote a song, Spanish Jack: a Dylan-ish picaresque about a cowboy-booted pimp. Again no hit, but it got DeVille an Oscar nomination for Best Song after its appearance in The Princess Bride.

It seemed the more the cognoscenti hailed him, the more the American public were determined to keep their distance. So at least half the year, DeVille and his band toured the other side of the Atlantic. "We couldn't sell out a damn pool hall in the US," says Thommy Price, "but we were fucking rock stars in Europe."

BUT IT WAS IN EUROPE that Willy's and Toots's trajectory became more troubling.

For instance, there was the time in Norway, playing their last headline show before joining Rod Stewart's European arena tour. Willy had a suspected broken rib and

Think Mink!

The 5 Essential Willy DeVille albums, by Sylvie Simmons.

Mink DeVille
Cabretta
(Capitol, 1977)

Willy's debut LP – and what a way to start. A fully-formed sound and attitude that was like nothing else at the time: street-tough but tender, with a musicality that encompassed the entire NYC melting pot. Includes the glorious ballad Mixed Up, Shook Up Girl and the UK hit Spanish Stroll.

Mink DeVille
Le Chat Bleu
(Capitol, 1980)

For the band's third and finest album, DeVille transplanted their mean-streets sound to Paris, where Edith Piaf's orchestrator added yet more intensity and heartache to die-hard romantic ballads That World Outside, You Just Keep Holding On and Heaven Stood Still. A masterpiece – but it lost the band their record deal.

Mink DeVille
Coup De Grâce
(Atlantic, 1981)

After the lush ballads on *Le Chat Bleu*, the follow-up focused on rock and soul, from New York doo-wop to New Jersey (AKA Springsteenian) sax-rock. The band sounds on great form, and Jack Nitzsche's timeless production is spot on. Their cover of Arthur Alexander's You Better Move On, with accordion and marimbas, is worth the admission price alone.

Willy DeVille
Victory Mixture
(Sky Ranch/Orleans, 1990)

Following his made-in-London solo debut, DeVille moved to New Orleans and recorded this covers album because he was "tired," he said, "of being Willy DeVille." Its 10 songs, all written by Louisianans, were recorded live in the studio with New Orleans aristocracy including Dr. John and Allen Toussaint. Rootsy, with a real warmth.

Willy DeVille
Horse Of A Different Color
(EastWest, 1999)

A mix of originals and covers, DeVille's sixth solo album was made in Memphis with Jim Dickinson and a band including the Muscle Shoals rhythm section – so yes, it sounds great. Willy's voice on the blues and R&B songs had never sounded rawer, and the Mexicana cover of Across The Borderline is a gem.

Toots took him to a doctor. While the doctor examined him in another room, she searched the office for drugs. The doctor called the police, who descended with snarling German shepherds on the band's hotel. Although Willy and Toots were the only ones using, they were all thrown in jail. Toots and Willy were put in separate cells and Toots had a meltdown, screaming. Somehow, Willy had an acoustic guitar in his cell and he spent the night singing Stand By Me to calm her down. The next morning everyone was released except for Willy and Toots. Someone came up with the bail money a day or two later, but too late for the Rod Stewart tour.

Back in New York, while the couple nodded out in their Chelsea hotel room, an intervention was being planned. The idea was that Lisa Leggett, Toots's best friend, who didn't do drugs, would sneak DeVille out of the hotel and take him to Colorado and clean him up. A few weeks later, DeVille was back on the road, this time with Leggett, not Toots. They married in 1984 and his new wife took over his business management. Four years later they moved to the place DeVille called his "spiritual home", New Orleans.

DeVille channelled the Big Easy as vividly as he had once serenaded the Big Apple. The first LP he recorded there, *Victory Mixture* (1990), was a tribute to the city and its music, with covers of classic New Orleans blues

Getty (3) Eyevine

Miracle worker: (clockwise from main) DeVille on Manhattan's Upper West Side, 1986; with Lisa DeVille at the Academy Awards, Los Angeles, 1988; DeVille in the saddle for *Horse Of A Different Color*, 1999; on-stage at the Amsterdam Paradiso, 1992; the new DeVille documentary.

"Mink DeVille knows the truth of a city street and the courage in a ghetto love song." Doc Pomus

and R&B played with a band of local legends including Dr. John, Earl King and Allen Toussaint. Released on a small label, it became DeVille's first European gold disc. He followed it with *Backstreets Of Desire* (1992): creole, doo-wop, roots rock and a mariachi version of Hey Joe that brought him another European hit.

On the back of this success DeVille and Leggett bought a grand old plantation house in Picayune, Mississippi – 45 miles outside of New Orleans – with 11 acres of land and stables where Willy and Lisa started breeding Spanish bullfighting horses. He kept his apartment in St Peter's Guest House in New Orleans, his neighbour a peer from his CBGB days, Johnny Thunders. That is, until April 23, 1991, when Thunders was found dead, reportedly an overdose of methadone and cocaine. Juggling phone calls from the Village Voice and Rolling Stone, DeVille made up a story of Thunders dying on the floor, guitar in hand, thinking it would be kinder on those who loved him. Later, he conjured a less romantic image: of Thunders's body contorted by rigor mortis. "When the body bag came out, it was in a 'U'," recalled DeVille. "It was pretty awful."

By contrast, Willy himself seemed in pretty good shape – despite his continued heroin use, a habit that Lisa had also acquired. Whilst playing lord of the manor in Picayune, he recorded two albums in 1995 – *Big Easy Fantasy*, made in New York and Paris, and *Loup Garou*, in LA and Nashville – and ended the decade with one of his best albums, *Horse Of A Different Color* (1999). A mix of originals and covers, it was produced by Jim Dickinson with a band that included Spooner Oldham, Roger Hawkins, David Hood and Luther Dickinson. Recalls Luther, "Willy would only record one song a day. He and my dad would sit and tell stories. I remember they talked about Doc Pomus a lot, he was a huge presence. Willy took me under his wing. He taught me how to throw knives in the parking lot."

IN 2000 DEVILLE FINALLY KICKED HEROIN, BUT too late to stop his life spiralling out of control. The IRS confiscated the plantation house and the horses for non-payment of tax. It was an enormous loss; this place was where he "refilled" himself, he said, after "empty[ing] myself out" on the road: "I constantly have this kind of hunger, an emptiness."

Willy and Lisa moved to New Mexico, where worse was to come. In 2001 Lisa committed suicide. Willy was the one who found her hanging and cut her down. Eaten up by guilt – DeVille had been seeing another woman in New York, Nina Lagerwall – he got in his car and sped through the mountains, "taunting death", crashing the car, breaking his arm and damaging his hip badly.

Close to penniless, he was urged to move back to New York. Lagerwall became his third wife and took care of the business – he couldn't tour because he was on probation for a drugs charge, so she found a lawyer – and took care of him. In hospital for hip surgery, doctors discovered he had diabetes and hepatitis C. In the course of treatment, they discovered cancer.

During his last years DeVille continued to tour, with Nina beside him. He released a live album, *Acoustic Trio Live In Berlin* (2002), and two studio albums, *Crow Jane Alley* (2004) and *Pistola* (2008).

In Paris, DeVille met one of his heroes, the folk and blues singer John Hammond Jr, and asked, "Would you play a song at my funeral?" Hammond replied, "What are you talking about, you're not going anywhere." But DeVille persisted: "You've got to promise you'll play this song." It was Bo Diddley's Who Do You Love.

Eighteen months later, in 2009, Willy died in New York, aged 58. Among the friends and former bandmates at the memorial was Hammond. At the end of the service, he pulled out his National Steel guitar and sang the song.

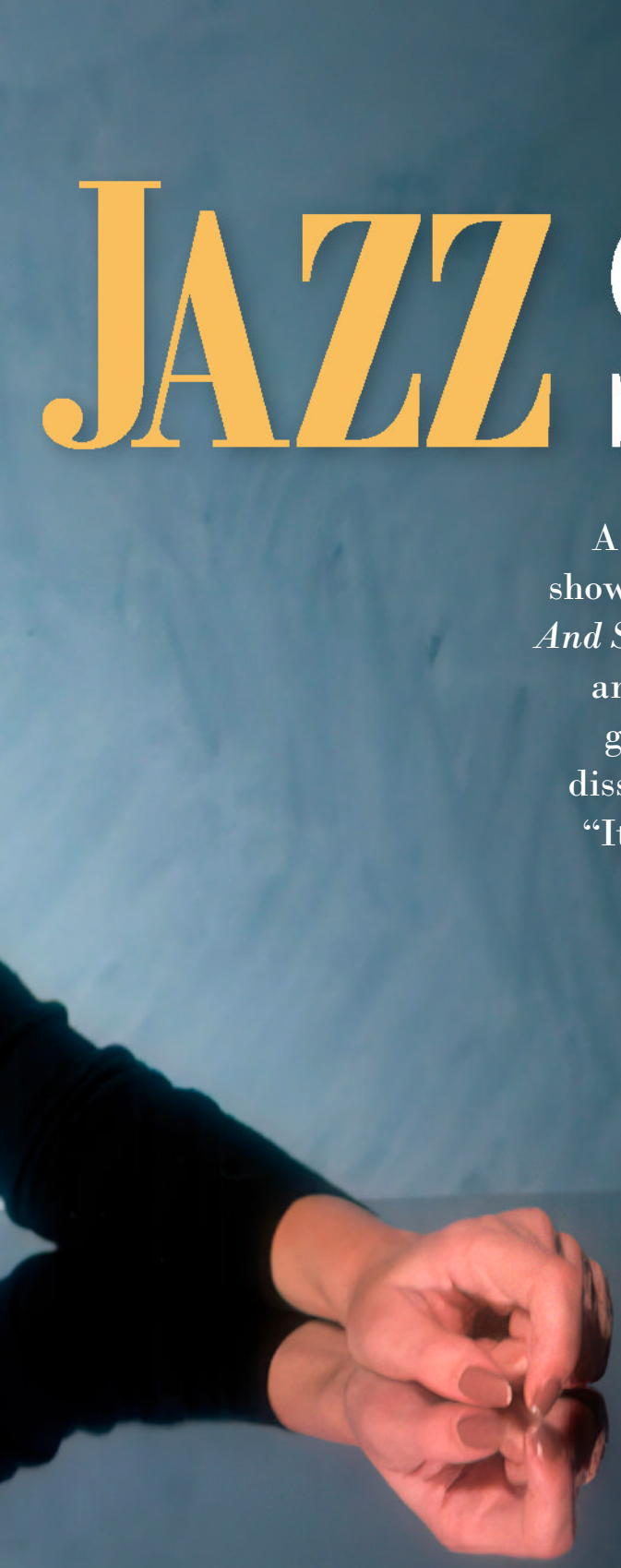
THE

JAZZ SINGER

As JONI MITCHELL preps for her landmark June 10 show, MOJO explores another key watershed: *Court And Spark*. Crazy chords, unreliable beaus, jazz cats and a drunk Lennon litter the path to her second great masterpiece, an intimate self-portrait and dissection of the LA scene's Gatsby-ish bacchanal. "It's an almost perfect record," learns TOM DOYLE.

PLUS: Joni Live! Her on-stage highlights.

Portrait by CHARLES BUSH.



So much spark: Joni Mitchell in 1974.

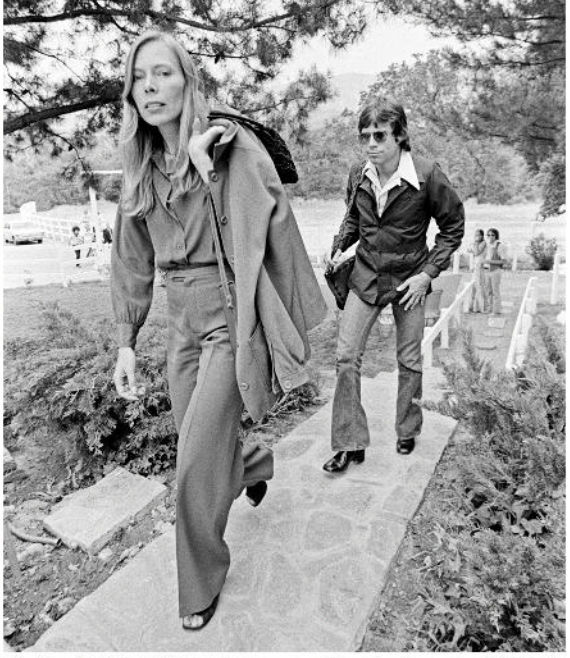
Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

SITUATED JUST SOUTH OF THE CORNER of Sunset Boulevard and North La Brea Avenue in Hollywood, the A&M recording studio lot was one of the most happening spots in Los Angeles in 1973. Formerly the site of Charlie Chaplin's film studio (where he'd encountered The Kid in 1921 and eaten his boot in The Gold Rush in 1925), it had been bought by A&M Records' Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss in '66 and quickly become one of the premier recording facilities in southern California.

"You would see everybody walking around the lot," remembers Cheech Marin, one half of stoner comedy duo Cheech & Chong, who recorded a series of albums at A&M and who would appear in a cameo skit on Joni Mitchell's pivotal sixth album, *Court And Spark*. "It was Leon Russell and The Carpenters and Joe Cocker and Joni Mitchell. We showed up and everybody would go, 'Who are these two guys recording outside in the courtyard?'"

LA in '73 was fast changing. Many of the Laurel Canyon hippy musicians were now rich, and mellowing marijuana had been replaced by ego-boosting hits of cocaine, which was *de rigueur* in both the recording studios and record company boardrooms. The previous November, Carly Simon's cryptic Number 1 song You're So Vain had been marketed via promo mirrors handed out to radio DJs, both to reflect the song's title and provide a handy surface for chopping out a line.

As night fell over Hollywood and the bars closed at midnight, sometimes the party moved on to A&M, where the notoriously riotous sessions for John Lennon's *Rock'n'Roll* album were taking place, overseen by a gun-packing, amyl nitrate-sniffing Phil Spector. More than once, Joni Mitchell dropped by: one time with her new buddy Jack Nicholson, another time with Warren Beatty. Lennon's girlfriend at the time, May Pang, later recalled the ex-Beatle had bitched behind Mitchell's back that the hip actors were "Joni's trophies". ➢



People and their parties: (clockwise from top right) Joni Mitchell and John Guerin at the wedding of Jimmy Webb and Patsy Sullivan, July 13, 1974; Joe Cocker (left) at the Webb-Sullivan nuptials; Jack Nicholson and Anjelica Huston; Charlie Chaplin Studios, Hollywood, later the site of A&M Studios; A&M's Joe Moss and Herb Alpert, 1966; Cheech & Chong, Mitchell collaborators, in 1973; John Lennon with (right) May Pang and Harry Nilsson enjoying a quiet drink at the Troubadour, West Hollywood, March 12, 1974.

Getty (6), Alamy

➤ In the studio next door, Mitchell was finessing the altogether more focused *Court And Spark*. Bored and drunk, Lennon gatecrashed proceedings to offer Joni some unsolicited advice.

"I played him something," she later recalled. "[He said] 'Oh, it's all a product of overeducation. You want a hit, don't you? Put some fiddles on it!'"

The irony being that at a time when Lennon was regressing to rock'n'roll first principles, Mitchell was undertaking a daring progressive leap; *Court And Spark* would be the album to transform her from confessional folk singer into the queen of LA jazz rock. In many ways, it would be just as starkly emotional as her previous landmark, 1971's *Blue*, but with its raw sentiments soothed by its rhythmically-driven songs and glossy production. Here, as she vividly described in its eerie piano ballad title track, she was exploring "the city of the fallen angels": songs about deranged parties, failed therapy sessions and lovelorn Bel Air sadness.

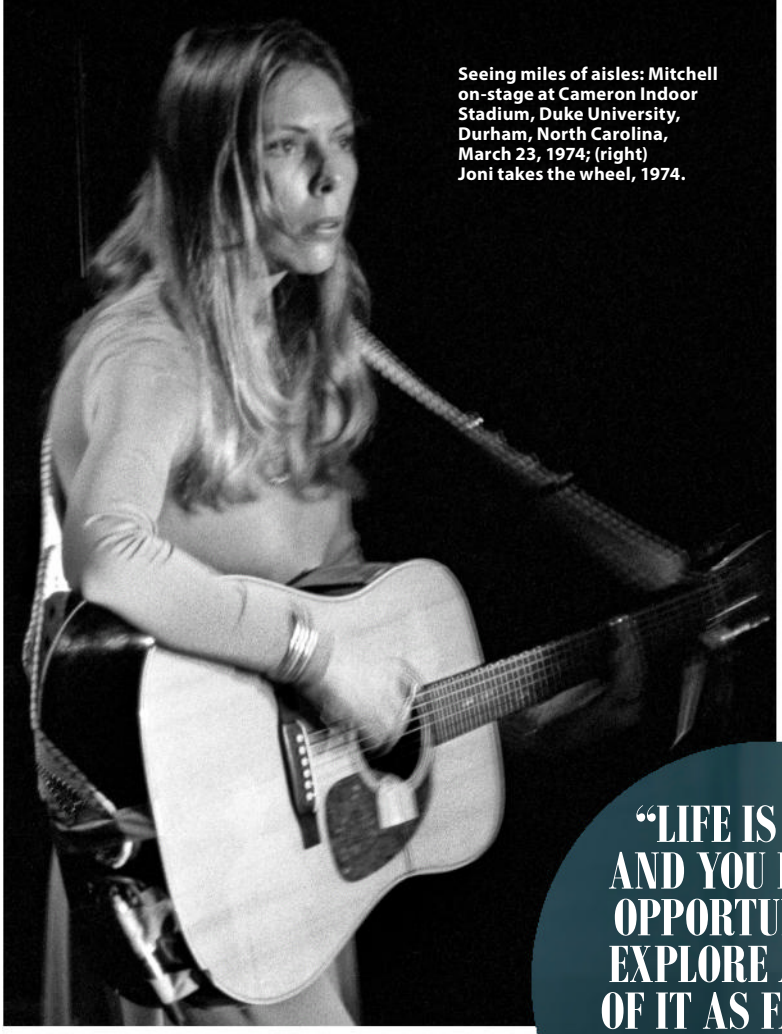
Like Lennon, however, not everyone was buying into Mitchell's new direction. "Joni reached a point where, to my mind, she was writing about rich people," Randy Newman later carped to MOJO writer Barney Hoskyns. "And I lost interest."

"I can only say that you write about that which you have access to," Mitchell responded in her defence. "So, if you go from the hippy thing to more of a Gatsby community, so what? Life is short and you have an opportunity to explore as much of it as fame and fortune will allow."

In truth, Mitchell had always been ambivalent about success. *Court And Spark* would only serve to make her even more famous. With its release, on January 14, 1974, it was to become her biggest album: hitting Number 2, going double platinum and marking the beginning of a whole new phase in her astonishing musical development.

AFTER THE COMMERCIAL TRIUMPHS OF *Blue* and its 1970 predecessor, *Ladies Of The Canyon*, Joni Mitchell was left feeling exposed and vulnerable. Later, she'd lament that "they were putting me on a pedestal, and I was wobbling." She had determined to become a hermit.

Aged 29, she dropped out of the Californian music scene and disappeared into the Canadian wilderness of British Columbia, moving into what she described as "a little stone house like a monastery where I could just go away and hide." There was no electricity, only hardwood



Seeing miles of aisles: Mitchell on-stage at Cameron Indoor Stadium, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, March 23, 1974; (right) Joni takes the wheel, 1974.

"LIFE IS SHORT AND YOU HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE AS MUCH OF IT AS FAME AND FORTUNE WILL ALLOW."
JONI MITCHELL

benches to sit on, not even any mirrors. Tired of public life and dedicated to this ascetic existence, she painted and wrote songs for what was to be her fifth album, *For The Roses*.

In Canada, she pondered her fame, and what she might do if she returned to face it, in characteristically poetic terms; not least in the title track of *For The Roses*, which viewed the moon as an empty spotlight and imagined the sound of the wind to be distant applause. By contrast, her newfound sense of freedom was vividly expressed by a Joel Bernstein photograph in the album's artwork: the singer shot from behind, naked on the shore.

"Norman [Seeff, photographer] took some pictures of Linda Ronstadt in her underwear," Mitchell explained last year when talking to Elton John for his Apple Music show, Rocket Hour. "I thought, 'Oh God, we gotta do this?' So, I decided to just be naked on my record (*laughs*). Get it over with."

When Mitchell returned to A&M Studios to make *For The Roses*, the main musical change was the overdubbing of woodwind and reeds, played by Tom Scott, a prodigious 24-year-old jazzer signed to Quincy Jones's short-lived Symbolic Records. Jones had introduced Scott to Joni's music by way of her 1969 song Woodstock, an instrumental, soprano recorder-led version of which he went on to record for his 1972 album, *Great Scott!*.

"Joni's recording engineer Henry Lewy called me one day," Scott recalls to MOJO today. "He said, 'Joni heard your Woodstock and asked if you'd like to participate in her record?' I said, 'Sure.' I mean, I was a working session musician. I thought she was a folk singer. I got rid of that notion very, very quickly (*laughs*)."

Scott was surprised to discover a songwriter with a unique and sophisticated musicality.

"I was very taken with the kind of ethereal, atmospheric approach that she took," he says. "It had a very spiritual, wonderful quality. I was just blown away by this woman… this singer, songwriter, instrumentalist whose music defied categorisation."

Henry Diltz, Getty

Scott was to be Mitchell's guide in introducing jazz elements to her songs. Although, in truth, there were already traces of the genre in her idiosyncratic style. What David Crosby had previously termed Joni's "weird chords" – played in folk-style open tunings on acoustic guitar – left much room for harmonic manoeuvre. Mitchell applied the approach to her piano playing.

"She was sitting at the piano," Scott remembers, "and she played the classic Miles Davis So What chord, a five note chord, in fourths. To me, it's a jazz chord. I said, 'Oh, man, there's that D minor 11th.' She said, 'I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know chords. I just like the sound of stuff that I find on the piano.' Her tunings and her chord sense were so sophisticated, just instinctively."

Equally impressed by Mitchell's vocals in the studio, Scott noted that she could effortlessly perform the tricky task of overdubbing her singing while matching her vibratos exactly, time and time again.

"There were some background vocals where she sang very, very precisely," he says. "If there were three or four parts, the vibratos were all in sync. She said, 'Could you double that with woodwinds?' And I thought, 'Well, if I'm gonna double it, why don't I go ahead and match the vibratos just exactly as she had?'

"The sound of this thing was like, 'We're breaking some new ground here.'"

IN EARLY 1973, FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER '72 RELEASE of *For The Roses*, Tom Scott was playing with his band L.A. Express at The Baked Potato, a small club in the Studio City district of the San Fernando Valley. The group consisted of crack LA sessioneers – drummer John Guerin (who had played with both Frank Sinatra and Frank Zappa), bassist Max Bennett (responsible for the slinky double bass line on Peggy Lee's Fever), and guitarist Larry Carlton and keyboard player Joe Sample of The Crusaders. Col- ➢

All aboard: Joni gets on the L.A. Express (from left) Tom Scott, Max Bennett, Robben Ford, Larry Nash, John Guerin, Mitchell, October 1974.

THE CAROUSEL OF TIME

Last year's revelatory Joni Jam at the Newport Folk Festival, preserved for the ages. By VICTORIA SEGAL.

JONI MITCHELL

★★★★

At Newport

(Rhino, CD/DL/LP)

IT DOESN'T require much close listening to identify the exact moment the audience at 2022's Newport Folk Festival realise Joni Mitchell is among them. Not a hologram, not a satellite link, but the real thing, centre-stage on a chair (throne, more accurately). Initially, there is exuberant applause as MC Brandi Carlile explains how she and her collaborative throng (Wynonna Judd, Marcus Mumford and Blake Mills among them) are about to recreate a "Joni Jam" – those all-star musical soirées at Mitchell's Californian home that became part of her recovery after an aneurysm in 2015. "How are we going to have a Joni Jam without our queen?" teases Carlile. "We're not." The cheering slides off the scale.

That Mitchell would perform again once seemed too much to ask, and her appearance at Newport – where she last played in 1969 – felt like a flash of magic. And considering the unseemly jostle it might have triggered, it's executed with real care and grace. There are, inevitably, moments when you wish it was all Mitchell, all the time – that there was more of her beautifully grained voice on *Night Ride Home*'s Come In From The Cold or *Hejira*'s Amelia – but the musicians are there to frame and reflect as much as support. When she does break through – the last mike-drop "and put up a parking lot" on a jubilant Big Yellow Taxi, Carey's final "but you're out of sight" – it's all the more affecting.

Yet it's no surprise Mitchell's presence is undimmable, not least when she plays the tensile guitar solo on *Court And Spark*'s Just Like This Train. If everyone else is awash with poignancy, she is instead laughing delightedly, or robustly explaining how *Hejira* was written on a road-trip made without a driving licence in a second-hand Mercedes, tailgating truckers "because they always signal when there's cops ahead."

It's when she takes full control, however, that the awed hush really descends. Gershwin's Summertime unfolds with slight autumn chill in her wonderful phrasing; Both Sides, Now invites you to count its rings, count every shift in meaning over the course of a life. The closing "singalong" of The Circle Game, meanwhile, makes the "carousel of time" something to be wondered at, not feared. The years don't fall away – you feel every one – but this recording shows just what a beautiful thing that can be.

"BOTH SIDES, NOW INVITES YOU TO COUNT ITS RINGS, COUNT EVERY SHIFT IN MEANING OVER THE COURSE OF A LIFE."

lectively, the quintet honed their chops and blew off steam during a Tuesday night residency.

Often, L.A. Express would play to only 10 or 20 people, although with the introduction of R&B grooves to their repertoire, they found that their jazz-funk was soon attracting much bigger crowds. One Tuesday, Joni Mitchell turned up to catch their set.

"Upon hearing the band," Scott recalls, "she said, 'Gee, I've never recorded with a full band before. You think your guys would be interested?' I said, 'I think we can work it out (*laughs*).' So, she gave me a tape of the tunes that she had written. I wrote out master rhythm parts and we went in the studio and began to work on what became *Court And Spark*."

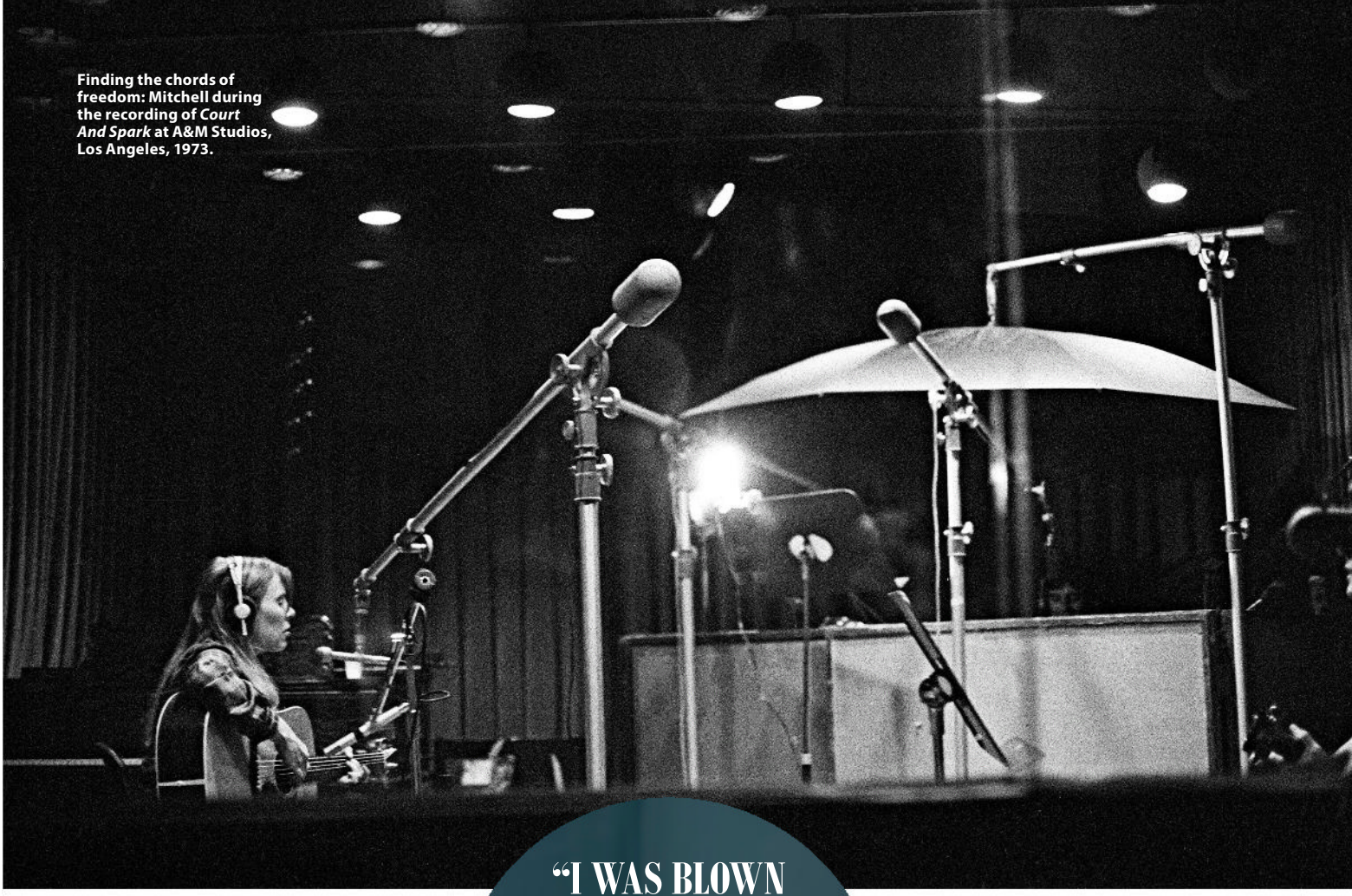
As Mitchell later understated, it would prove to be "a good expansion". The sessions at A&M were once again overseen by engineer Henry Lewy, who had recorded all of the singer's albums there since 1969's *Clouds*.

"Henry was great," says Ellis Sorkin, the assistant engineer on *Court And Spark*. "Joni was so much of her own force that Henry was just there to sort of guide things around. He wasn't one of those kind of producers: 'OK, no, we need to try a different arrangement.' It'd be more just like, 'Oh, maybe we should add that.' It was more of a reinforcement."

"It was clear that in the relationship between Henry and Joni, Henry was a meditator," says Tom Scott. "He had the calmest, most peaceful kind of vibe. He was just there to help Joni with whatever she wanted."

"I mean, technically he was her engineer/producer, not really her *producer* producer," Sorkin adds, "because she pretty much knew everything she wanted, always. But Tom was also such an important connective tissue for her with arrangements. I mean, if you were to say who produced the record with Joni, you could almost look to him equally or more so than to Henry."

In fact, the sleeve of *Court And Spark* bore no production credit whatsoever. In a 1973 interview with her friend Malka Marom, Mitchell even came over as vehemently anti-producer. "A record producer is completely unneces-



Finding the chords of freedom: Mitchell during the recording of *Court And Spark* at A&M Studios, Los Angeles, 1973.

sary," she argued. "It's a babysitter, it's an interior decorator. If you know what you're doing, you have an engineer. You go in, you have the vision, he makes the sound, he has his knowledge, you have yours, and you interact."

No matter who was actually in charge, the new set-up immediately yielded results. Not least with the shuffling, upbeat feel of Help Me, the swooning, fretting love song that was rumoured to be about Mitchell's new relationship with John Guerin. "There was that romantic interest with John, obviously," says Sorkin. "He was sort of basking in his newfound glory as Mr Mitchell," quips Scott.

Mitchell's lyrics were wide open to interpretation, particularly in the way they oscillated between first and second person (was she also addressing herself when she sang "you"?). At first glance, the haunting Court And Spark may have seemed as romantically minded as Help Me, but Mitchell's future husband/co-producer Larry Klein (whom she married in 1982 and divorced in '94) later claimed that the lyrics concerned the singer's encounter with a deluded fan who believed that she was writing coded messages to him in her songs.

"[He] makes such a good case that she starts to actually feel like she understands what he's saying," Klein told writer Michelle Mercer. "So there's the idea of the narrator being in such a fragile position that they start believing what someone who's sitting on the edge of insanity is telling them." (Mitchell subsequently disputed Klein's explanation of the song.)

"I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY THIS WOMAN… THIS SINGER, SONGWRITER, INSTRUMENTALIST WHOSE MUSIC DEFIED CATEGORISATION."
TOM SCOTT

More on the nose was Free Man In Paris, which dealt with Mitchell's friend and Asylum Records' boss David Geffen's liberating experiences in the French capital, far from the stresses of the LA record business. Geffen, however, reportedly begged Mitchell not to release the track, fearing that the line about finding "a very good friend of mine" would somehow out him as gay (a fact he didn't make public until 1992).

Adding backing vocals on the song's chorus were Mitchell exes David Crosby and Graham Nash. In the studio, Ellis Sorkin noticed how their presence seemed to help Mitchell relax. "Joni was a different kind of personality," he says. "She was a little bit… I don't want to say aloof… but when there was a group of people around, or Crosby and Nash, she opened up a bit more. A lot more chatting and whatnot."

Other guests on the album included Robbie ➢

A very good friend of mine: Mitchell with Asylum Records' David Geffen.

Henry Diltz, Getty (2), Sherry Rayn Barnett

Twisted turns: Mitchell is joined by (from left) Stephen Stills, David Crosby, Graham Nash and Neil Young at CSNY's Wembley Stadium concert, September 14, 1974; (below) Joni welcomes Annie Ross on-stage at CSNY Wembley.

Henry Diltz, Getty (2)

➢ Robertson and José Feliciano, playing electric guitar on Raised On Robbery and Free Man In Paris respectively. These contributions were often recorded in bursts of activity, in sharp contrast to Mitchell's own slow lane approach. "It wasn't at all like when she was doing things herself," Sorkin says. "Because when she did things herself it would be interminably long."

Mitchell would often take three hours to nail a vocal (on her next album, *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, says Sorkin, it might be three days). What was clear was that the singer's voice was changing, the soprano range of her earlier albums dropping to alto, whether due to ageing or the fact that she smoked anything up to four packets of cigarettes a day.

"Well, it couldn't have helped," Tom Scott chuckles. "She chain-smoked Marlboros. In fact, she's kind of the one that started me smoking. I'd walk into that booth, and it was like, 'Pffff.' Finally, I just said, 'OK, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.'"

Scott and Mitchell worked so closely together on *Court And Spark* that the former was soon able to interpret the latter's more abstract, painterly requests, such as wanting a musical colour to be "a little more yellow here". Scott also provided orchestral arrangements, including the stunning score for ballad Down To You, for which he and the singer won a Grammy in 1975 for Best Arrangement Accompanying Vocalist(s). However, for this song at least, Scott would have appreciated greater acknowledgement on the album sleeve.

"I felt slighted when the credits came out," Scott admits. "It said 'arranged by Joni Mitchell and Tom Scott'. You know, *I* arranged the damn thing. I took what she had played on the piano and orchestrated it. She was incapable of doing anything like that. But she still insisted on putting in the credits that she was co-arranger.

"She was a bit selfish that way, I thought. So I was disappointed… But I did win my first Grammy."

"TWISTED WAS EASY. I DON'T THINK JONI GAVE US ANY DIRECTION. THE ONLY THING SHE SAID WAS 'GO!'"
CHEECH MARIN

Sorkin meanwhile attests to Mitchell's unrivalled levels of perfectionism on *Court And Spark*. "It was next level," he says, "but it never felt picky. When I worked with Karen Carpenter, it felt to me almost like picky. I got it, but I [did think], 'Oh, was that really necessary to replace the breath between those two words?'

"Joni wasn't quite like that. It was more about just getting into the feeling that she wanted… eventually."

A FAR MORE SPONTANEOUS EXPERIment was conducted on the evening of August 26, 1973, when Mitchell joined Neil Young and the Santa Monica Flyers at Studio Instrument Rentals in Hollywood during the stoned and loose sessions for *Tonight's The Night*. Together they cut a raucous version of Raised On Robbery, a song in which she inhabited the character of a hooker soliciting a john in a Canadian hotel bar.

Mitchell was never a big fan of Crazy Horse (whose drummer Ralph Molina and bassist Billy Talbot were on the session), dismissing them as a bar band "that should not be elevated to the concert level." But having been a rock'n'roller at heart since her teens, she proffered her crunchiest song to date, borrowing Young's Gretsch electric guitar for the take. When Young's producer David Briggs played the recording back to her, however, she hated the ragged, drunken result. (Not until 2020 would the track receive an official release – on Young's *Archives Volume II: 1972-1976*.)

There was no questioning the song's narrative strengths, however. After hearing the version on *Court And Spark*, another of Mitchell's new film star friends, Faye Dunaway, admired the singer's prostitute persona, saying "You're so lucky because you can invent your own roles."

But not all of Mitchell's new songs were fictions. The dreamy acoustic layering of People's Parties belied the anxiety of its narrator, gripped by "frightened silence" as she witnesses a disturbing scene. Its source, according to Jack Nicholson's then-partner Anjelica Huston, was a dinner ➢

Inventing her next role: Joni Mitchell in 1973.

THESE FLIGHTS TONIGHT

10 live recordings that bottle Mitchell lightning. Roll on Joni Jam, says VICTORIA SEGAL.

URGE FOR GOING

Live At The Second Fret, Philadelphia, November 1966

(from Archives Volume I)

After the earlier, folkier performances on this collection, this shows Mitchell's own writing taking "chevron flight" as elegantly as the song's migrating geese. An introduction about Saskatoon winters – plus a joke about Kalamazoo – underlines her direction of travel. Up and away.

LITTLE GREEN

Live At Canterbury House, Ann Arbor, October 27, 1967

(from Archives Volume I)

Mitchell's barely veiled letter to the daughter she placed for adoption in 1965 was in live circulation four years before its release on *Blue*. Here, on a recording unearthed in 2018, there's a raw, husky catch to her tender wishes for "Kelly Green".

CHELSEA MORNING

Live At Carnegie Hall, February 1, 1969

(from Archives Volume II)

Mitchell's mother Myrtle told her she looked like she was wearing "rags" for this big night; her father Bill more accurately described her as a "queen". An imperial New York performance, lighting up the concert hall with primary colours and present tenses.

CALIFORNIA

The Johnny Cash Show, 1970

(from jonimitchell.com)

"The instrument is the dulcimer… and the voice is Miss Joni Mitchell," rumbles Johnny Cash, introducing her third appearance on his show. As well as this radiant version of *Blue*'s boho travelogue, Mitchell and Cash also duetted on Girl From The North Country.

CACTUS TREE

Live At Los Angeles Music Center, March 4, 1974

(from Miles Of Aisles)

Buffeted by stronger cross-currents than those moving beneath the version on 1968's *Song To A Seagull*, this is one of the intimate acoustic highlights of *Miles Of Aisles*. Mitchell's glorious phrasing is a pure manifestation of somebody "busy being free".

JERICHO

Live At Universal Amphitheatre, Los Angeles August 14-17, 1974

(from Miles Of Aisles)

Ahead of herself again – Jericho would not enjoy a studio outing 'til *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* in 1977 – this shows Mitchell and jazz-fusion backing band L.A. Express taking down the walls around a song about love's surrender. A rich exchange, released as a single.

COYOTE

Santa Barbara County Bowl, September, 1979

(from Shadows And Light)

The Band might have been lightly flummoxed by this song when Mitchell joined them for the wry, spry version at 1976's The Last Waltz, but this version, featuring Jaco Pastorius and Pat Metheny, is at full liberated stretch, with a luscious bite to its wildness.

FREE MAN IN PARIS

Santa Barbara County Bowl, September, 1979

(from Shadows And Light)

Court And Spark's yearning for "unfettered" freedom is fully unleashed here, Michael Brecker's saxophone bouncing off any remaining walls until they give way. You don't need to watch the film to imagine Mitchell's delight – it's in every note.

THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES

Nara, Japan, May 22, 1994

(from jonimitchell.com)

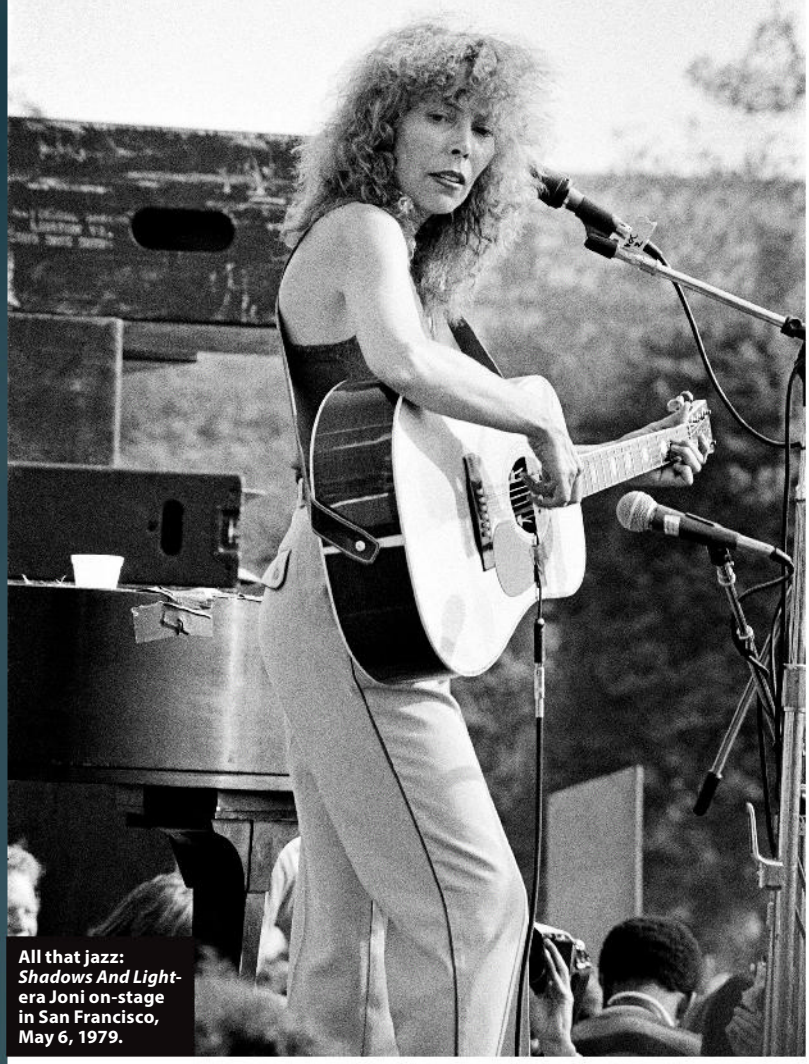
Described by eyewitness Ry Cooder as "bone-chilling", this spare festival version of the unflinching track from 1994's *Turbulent Indigo* hits every beat of horror and rage. Mitchell is backed by The Chieftains, Paddy Moloney's tin whistle calling in further ghosts.

BOTH SIDES, NOW

Live At The Newport Folk Festival, 2022

(from Joni At Newport)

The magic of Mitchell's surprise appearance at the festival she last played in 1969 is encapsulated in this magisterial performance, her rich voice bringing meaning she couldn't have predicted five decades earlier. Something's lost, but something's gained.



All that jazz: *Shadows And Light*-era Joni on-stage in San Francisco, May 6, 1979.

party at which Dutch model Apollonia van Ravenstein had a dramatic meltdown.

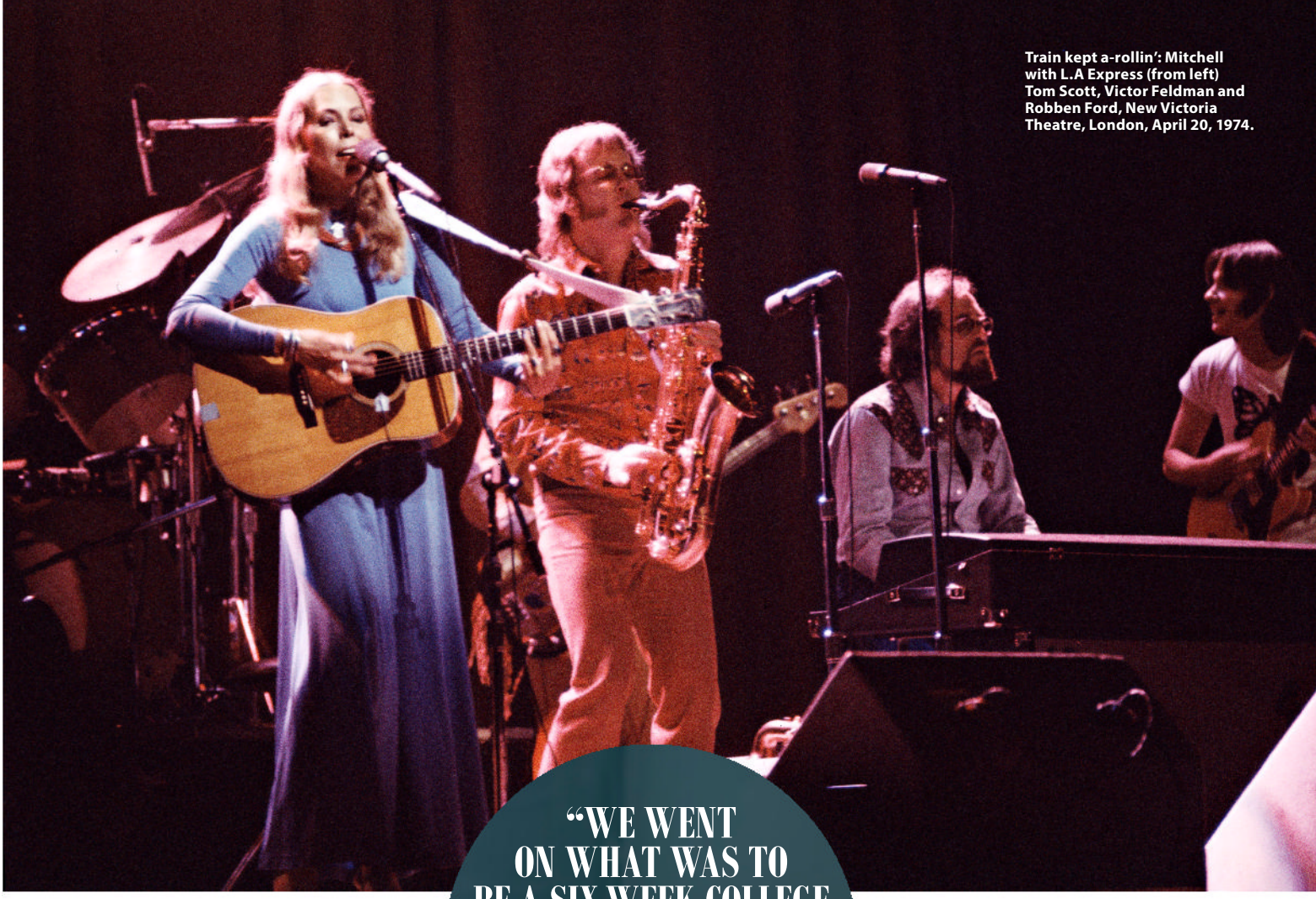
"[Apollonia] had been crying that night – laughing and crying, it was hard to figure out which or why," Huston recounted in her 2014 memoir, Watch Me. "She had balanced a lampshade on her head; tears were pouring down her cheeks." It was later revealed that Nicholson had slept with van Ravenstein, casually telling Huston it was a "mercy fuck".

In the tracklist, People's Parties segued into the quietly desperate and intensely personal The Same Situation, in which Mitchell is tormented by an elusive love. The opening lines of the third verse – "You've had lots of lovely women/Now you turn your gaze to me/Weighing the beauty and the imperfection/To see if I'm worthy" – were rumoured to be addressed to Warren Beatty. And it was also said that Jackson Browne was the real-life tardy lover of Car On A Hill, "who makes friends easy/He's not like me." Tom Scott, certainly, is convinced the singer was "telling you her innermost feelings in the most remarkable, unique way."

Lightening the mood considerably, there's Twisted, a faithful cover of the jokey jazz tune about psychoanalysis first performed by Annie Ross in 1952 and re-recorded by her trio Lambert, Hendricks & Ross in 1960 (the version Mitchell knew). "I went through analysis for a while this year," the singer admitted to Malka Marom in 1973. "I felt I wanted to talk to someone about confusion, which we all have. Since it's a song about analysis, I feel that I earned the right to sing it."

Cheech Marin, who performed the spoken-word part with Tommy Chong ("Man, the chick is twisted… crazy!") tells MOJO today, "She called us and said, 'You know that song Twisted?' I said, 'Yeah, I know it real well.' She said, 'Well, I'd like you and Tommy to come in and do a little interlude in the break. You think you can do that?' 'Yeah, sure. No problem.'

"So, we went right in and had a good old time. It was easy. I think we just did one or maybe two takes at the most. But it was a good fit for us. I don't think she gave us any direction. The only thing she said was 'Go!'"



Train kept a-rollin': Mitchell with L.A Express (from left) Tom Scott, Victor Feldman and Robben Ford, New Victoria Theatre, London, April 20, 1974.

> "WE WENT ON WHAT WAS TO BE A SIX-WEEK COLLEGE TOUR. BUT THE ALBUM WENT ON THE CHARTS AND WOULD… NOT… LEAVE."
> TOM SCOTT

Analysis also figured in Trouble Child, with its central figure poignantly "breaking like the waves at Malibu," and its snaking groove moving towards R&B. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mitchell was at the time an enormous fan of Marvin Gaye's *Trouble Man*, released in '72. "I had this song on an album, and I kept the needle on this track, playing it over and over," she said of Gaye's track. "It was so influential to my music and my singing. It excites me from the downbeat… the way the drums roll in… the suspense… the approaching storm of it."

Equally, Mitchell was much enamoured of the sound of Stevie Wonder's 1972 albums (*Music Of My Mind*, *Talking Book*), even going as far as taking Henry Lewy to a Wonder recording session, when he was making *Innervisions*, in her quest to achieve a similar bass-end quality on *Court And Spark*: "I said, 'Listen to this. The bottom end is getting fatter. Why can't we do it?'"

"Yeah, she did like to have some more bottom," says Ellis Sorkin. "It gave it more depth. Earlier records like *For The Roses* and *Blue*, if you listen to them, they don't have quite that fuller low end. It was bringing up more of the bass drum and bass guitar into the mix."

Unusually for the era, Mitchell took a long time perfecting the mixes for *Court And Spark*, spending up to eight hours on each track. "Back then people just didn't do it," says Sorkin. "It used to be that people would mix a record in one to three hours and it was done. So, yeah, she sort of started that. That was her seeing the future of the way things were to become."

The sound of *Court And Spark* was to contribute greatly to its commercial success – its songs sounded warm on hi-fi and silky smooth across the FM airwaves. Additionally, the driving rhythms of its singles, Help Me and Free Man In Paris, prompted heavy rotation on radio.

"Up until *Court And Spark*," said Mitchell, "they wouldn't play me on the radio because there was no drums. So I get drums, I get a little airplay."

Upon its release, it was clear that *Court And Spark* was both a masterpiece and a giant step forward. Not that Mitchell's friend Bob Dylan seemed particularly impressed. When the singer played him the finished album, he fell asleep. "I think Bobby was just being cute," she reckoned.

RECORD-BUYERS PROVED MORE alert to Mitchell's new direction. With *Court And Spark* selling strongly, Mitchell embarked on a tour, backed by L.A. Express, which was extended again and again. "We start rehearsing at SIR down in Hollywood," Tom Scott remembers. "Then we went on what was to be a six-week college auditorium kind of tour. But the album went on the charts and would… not… leave."

Larry Carlton and Joe Sample chose to focus on The Crusaders rather than tour with Mitchell, and so Scott recruited 23-year-old guitarist Robben Ford (who'd learned his trade backing Jimmy Witherspoon) and the more seasoned jazz pianist Roger Kellaway, then 34.

"Joni's not trained," Kellaway points out to MOJO today. "And yet, she felt comfortable picking a band that was *completely* trained. I mean, classically, and sort of able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. The courage of Joni… it's a testament to the flexibility of her creativity."

It was the first time Mitchell had performed live with a band and she relished showcasing her new, more muscular songs along- ➢

Alamy, Getty

side the tender acoustic numbers. "Hopefully," she said to Malka Marom ahead of the opening show at Kiel Opera House in St Louis on January 18, 1974, "the tour's concerts will… show a spectrum of a person's feelings, as opposed to locking into one facet."

But while no one cried out "Judas!", there was some resistance from a minority to Mitchell's new, band-based sound. In St Louis, one yelled, "Let's hear her without the band." A beat later, another replied, "Let's hear her *with* the band." In Chicago, at the Auditorium Theatre on January 23, someone in the crowd shouted out, "Turn down the volume!" Mitchell coolly responded, "What's the matter, do we have a hall full of purists? I thought Chicago liked to boogie."

To placate the traditionalists, Mitchell initially arrived on-stage solo to perform a selection of her acoustic songs. "I'd be offstage, but I'd be listening," says Tom Scott. "I don't remember *ever* hearing her flub a lyric, a chord, nothing. She was perfect. I found that to be astonishing, especially in light of the fact that those tunes, the lyrics are complicated and wordy. And she never forgot one. Of course, it's her own poetry. But still, we all screw up every now and then. Not her (*laughs*)."

"She would just walk on-stage," says Roger Kellaway, "and the audience would go on the journey."

As the tour progressed, Mitchell and L.A. Express grew in confidence. Kellaway remembers that Mitchell's manager Elliot Roberts encouraged him to rock out behind his Fender Rhodes electric piano.

"Elliot spent a lot of time trying to groom me more into a rock'n'roll player," he says. "Either by the way I dressed… or there were some Jerry Lee Lewis kind of glissandos I did that the crowd always loved. He said, 'Good, you should keep doing that.'"

The tour reached London in April '74, for a three-night stand at the New Victoria Theatre where famous fans including Rod Stewart and George Harrison came to pay their respects. The latter was already pals with Tom Scott, having first met him when Scott played with Ravi Shankar on the 1968 soundtrack for the movie Charly. "At that point," says Scott, "I became George Harrison's close to best friend."

After the show, Harrison invited Scott and the other members of L.A. Express to his sprawling Henley-on-Thames estate, Friar Park, where they ended up in the former Beatle's studio, cutting two tracks, Hari's On Tour (Express) and Simply Shady, destined to appear on his 1974 album, *Dark Horse*. Kellaway found recording with Harrison and staying in his Victorian neo-Gothic mansion quite a trip. "I remember meditating in one of the high turrets," he says.

When Mitchell and the band returned to the States and picked up the tour, Henry Lewy came on the road to record shows, with a view to releasing a live album (various gigs having already been taped and nixed by Mitchell). In the end, the bulk of what was to be the double LP, *Miles Of Aisles* (released November 1974, only 10 months after *Court And Spark*), was captured during a five-night stint at the Universal Amphitheatre in Universal City, LA County.

"That was really close to the end of the tour," says Ellis Sorkin. "By that time the show was so… y'know… *boom*. We knew exactly what to do."

JONI MITCHELL'S RELATIONSHIP with jazz was to endure and grow deeper throughout the '70s: from the more expansive arrangements of *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* (1975) through the mesmeric travelogue of *Hejira* ('76) and on to her *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* double ('77) and her audience-testing, if authenticity-proving, collaboration with a legend of the genre on *Mingus* ('79).

Court And Spark, meanwhile, cast a long shadow of influence down the decades. Stevie Nicks, in a 2008 interview with MOJO's Sylvie Simmons, remembered hearing the album, soon after its release, while tripping on acid: "I was with my producer [Keith Olsen] at his house, with a set of speakers that were taller than [a] fireplace, and I was in a safe place, and I sat there on the floor and listened to that record. That was a pretty dynamic experience."

Madonna, 15 when the album was released, later recalled, "In high school, I worshipped Joni Mitchell and sang everything from *Court And Spark*, my coming-of-age record."

Brian Eno went even further in 2016, calling *Court And Spark*, "an almost perfect album… it's one of the most grown-up records ever made in that the things she's talking about and thinking about are such serious and complicated emotional situations. It's the best engineered album you've ever heard. I learned a lot from that album and have listened to it as much as any album I've ever owned."

But it was Prince who proved the most devoted Joni worshipper, later quoting Help Me in The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker on 1987's *Sign O' The Times* ("It was Joni singing, 'Help me, I think I'm falling…'"). Mitchell even claimed to have spotted the teenage Prince at one of her shows in Minnesota. "He must have been about 15," she said. "He was in an aisle seat, and he had unusually big eyes. He watched the whole show with his collar up, looking side to side. You couldn't miss him – he was a little Princeling.

"Prince used to write me fan mail with all the U's and hearts that way that he writes," she added. "The office took it as mail from the lunatic fringe and just tossed it."

"She tended to attract those kinds of people like Prince," says Cheech Marin, "who really saw her as an artist over and above anybody else who was doing the same thing at the same time. All musicians are just enamoured of her. Every album, it was a different leap forward."

Ultimately, it was not only the *sound* of jazz but also the music's restlessly questing spirit that animated *Court And Spark* and the Joni Mitchell albums that followed.

"I think she stands out as a marvellous example of an artist never resting on her laurels," concludes Tom Scott. "Like Miles Davis, she was constantly searching. Always reaching for the next thing."

That'll be the deity: Rufus Wainwright pays homage to Joni at her 75th birthday celebration, November 7, 2018.

Getty

"SHE'S STILL A CONTRARIAN SPIRIT"

Joni's magical return to the world, and the stage, by RUFUS WAINWRIGHT.

JONI'S JOURNEY over the last few years has been astounding. I first met her on her 70th birthday, not long before her aneurysm. I adored her then, and how Joni's progressed through her trials and tribulations has deepened my love for her. When my husband and I hadn't seen her in a long time because she'd been sick, I was feeling low and negative but all that lifted when Joni walked in, it's like being in the presence of a deity (*laughs*). I have first-hand knowledge of what a brain injury can do, after my grandmother's stroke, when she became incredibly reclusive and uncommunicative, but Joni is the opposite – through her drive, her work and the people around her who adore her, she's turned her situation into a profoundly positive process. She seems more relaxed to me, more at ease with the world.

I didn't know Joni was going to appear at Newport, but I understand why it was under wraps, like a well-orchestrated coup. She was fabulous too. When you think about the story of rock and folk, or popular song, it's like the twilight of the gods; without people like Joni, there wouldn't be a Newport folk festival.

When I last saw Joni, a few weeks ago at her Bel Air house, she was boisterous and joyous. At one point, I told her how amazing her '60s TV appearances were, which I'd watched on YouTube, and she said I was totally wrong, they were all awful! That's typical Joni, she's still a contrarian spirit, which is what we love about her. She was excited about the Gorge show. It deeply touches Joni when people admire her work. She's not afraid to receive love either. But she wears it lightly. She's still warm and funny, and more playful, shall we say, which is probably one of the keys to her success.

As told to Martin Aston

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

"*Nebraska* is both Holy Grail and Death Star, still resolutely elusive even after 40 years."

KEITH CAMERON VISITS BRUCEWORLD. BOOKS P106.

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Reach out, touch faith

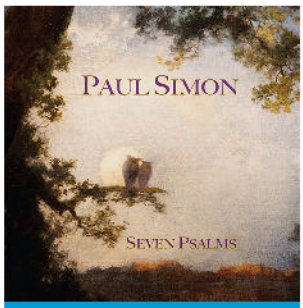
At once sublime and chilling, Simon's latest act of devotion is a masterpiece. Says David Fricke. Illustration by arnO.

Paul Simon

★★★★

Seven Psalms

OWL/LEGACY. CD/DL/LP



"*Seven Psalms* is stone-cold beautiful… The sound of life in all of its wonder, candour and gratitude – and not yet done."

IN A 1972 Rolling Stone cover story – his first as a solo artist – Paul Simon recalled an exchange with his then-boss at Columbia Records, Clive Davis, who warned the singer that whatever success he enjoyed on his own, it would never beat the 1960s hits and glory of his million-selling duo with Art Garfunkel. "How do you know what I'll do?" Simon countered. "I don't even know what I'm gonna do in the next decade of my life. It could be maybe my greatest time of work. Maybe I'm finished. Maybe I'm not gonna do my thing until I'm 50."

Simon, who turns 82 in October, was more right – and off in his maths – than he knew. One of the most acclaimed singer-songwriters of his generation, he has released more than a dozen studio albums of determined exploration and meticulous craft, most going some combination of gold, platinum and Top 5 in both the United States and UK. The 1986 South African odyssey *Graceland* far outsold every original Simon & Garfunkel album except the 1970 monster *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Some risks aged better than they resonated at the time (1983's *Hearts And Bones*), and recent work has been intriguing if not cash-register honey: the 2006 digital adventure *Surprise*; the opulent jazz-dream treatment of older, deep tracks on 2018's *In The Blue Light*.

Even by that extended measure, *Seven Psalms* is a late-breaking shock: a masterpiece, at once sublime and chilling – and possibly Simon's last, by design. A single album-length piece, it is structured like a worship service with seven linked hymns. Raised in the Jewish faith, Simon has essentially been creating psalms – songs of praise, yearning and confession – for as long as he's made records. But *Seven Psalms* is about nothing less than final reckoning: the artist – a life-long specialist in packing the big thoughts and finely wrought syntax into pop song frames – doing the hard accounting at sunset as he looks back at what's been did and what's been hid, to borrow Donovan's 1965 album title.

"Nothing dies of too much love," Simon promises in The Lord, the record's opening prayer and a recurring theme. The singer's God is also "a terrible swift sword" in a verse that cites Covid and global warming as vengeance we've only brought on ourselves. "The pity is/The damage that's done/Leaves so little time/For amends," Simon observes ruefully in Trail Of Volcanoes. There is no comfort without judgement here – and the seesaw gets pretty rough.

Simon's ambition is deceptive. At 33 minutes, *Seven Psalms* (which comes as one unbroken track digitally and on CD) is longer than Simon & Garfunkel's entire 1964 debut album, *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.* The production is immersive if restrained by Simon's usual standards, its luxuriant spaces dotted with subtly triggered details. A bass harmonica chugging through the rumbling-blues broadside My Professional Opinion ("So all rise to the occasion/Or all sink into despair") evokes a familiar, healing certainty: the sound of that instrument in I Know There's An Answer on The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*. In Trail Of Volcanoes, Simon recalls a time before the stardom and tensions with Garfunkel – his troubadour spell on the British folk scene in 1965 – against starry-night electronics and the circular spell of a gamelan, as if the singer actually spent that formative year under South Asian skies.

But everything on *Seven Psalms* happens in humbled tones, at a fluid, unhurried pace. And it is a decisively, solitary work. Except for some outside brushstrokes (Swiss tuned bells; a touch of strings; cameos by the British a cappella group Voces8) and two pivotal appearances by Simon's wife, singer Edie Brickell, he sings and plays everything – varieties of guitar, keyboards and percussion – and most of that to discreet effect. The focus is entirely on Simon's plaintive voice and precise, acoustic fingerpicking, a fundamental intimacy not that far from the budget expediency of his first solo LP, *The Paul Simon Songbook*, made over three days in London in his British summer of '65.

Indeed, the first thing you hear in The Lord, after the gong-like entrance, is Simon playing a guitar motif in the fleet modal-corkscrew image of Davy Graham's 1961 classic Anji (see Back Story), a lick that runs through the album like a lifeline. Simon needs the help. "I lived a life of pleasant sorrows/Until the real deal came," he confesses in Love Is Like A Braid, underscoring that "deal" with a clap of thunder. Simple wants go unfulfilled in Your Forgiveness. The best you can hope for sometimes? "In sorrow," Simon contends in that song, "a beautiful song/Lives in the heart and sings for all."

The Sacred Harp is an ingenious remake of an older Simon drama: the cross-country bus ride in America on Simon & Garfunkel's 1968 album, *Bookends*. This time, the lovers are "two hapless hitchhikers" catching a lift in a pickup truck to anywhere but where they've been ("They don't like different there/They would have mowed us down"). Brickell plays the stronger half in this couple – "Her voice a blend/Of regional perfumes," as Simon brilliantly puts it in a metaphor that manages to sum up both the differences that bind and tear at the nation and the unique, intoxicating scent of a woman.

Brickell is back in the final psalm, Wait, holding up more than her half of the sky as Simon keeps trying to grab a little more time, "packing my gear" and listening to "the ghost songs I own/Jumpin', jivin' and moanin'/Through a heartbroken microphone." He's not ready to go. And wherever he's going, he couldn't bear to be without her. Brickell, who has the last word, assures him: What's next is not the end. It's homecoming.

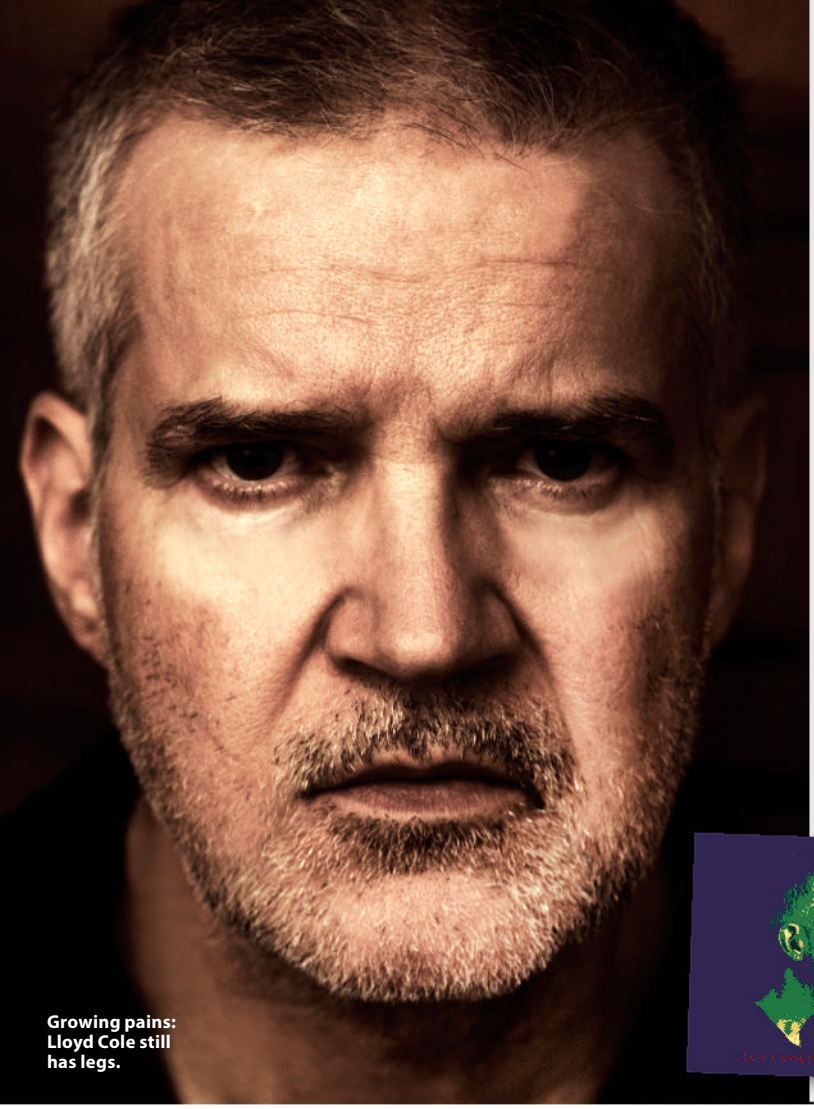
Simon has been this way before. "A time of innocence/A time of confidences," he sang with Garfunkel in the brief title song on *Bookends*. "Preserve your memories/They're all that's left you." *Seven Psalms* is the view from much farther down the road. It is also one of the most compelling and stone-cold beautiful albums Simon has ever made. The sound of silence is inevitable. This is the sound of life in all of its wonder, candour and gratitude – and not yet done.

Getty

BACK STORY: ANJI

● In December 1965, as the folk-rock remix of The Sound Of Silence headed for Number 1 and just two weeks after Simon returned from his year in Britain, he and Garfunkel rushed to make an album. They cut eight songs in a week including five remakes from *The Paul Simon Songbook* and Davy Graham's (above) Anji – with a lot of Bert Jansch in there. Simon retained a quote from the jazz hit Work Song in Jansch's '65 recording; *Sounds Of Silence* used the misspelling on Jansch's LP ('Angie'); and he was originally miscredited on the label as the writer. (Graham got his byline on the back cover.) "It's just a standard chord sequence," Wizz Jones, another folk icon, said of Anji. But "Davey's timing was so cool."

Seven Psalms



Growing pains: Lloyd Cole still has legs.

Lloyd Cole

★★★★

On Pain

EARMUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Grappling with the ineffable at his Massachusetts studio, The Establishment.

"OF COURSE the table is rigged for the house," sings Lloyd Cole on *On Pain*'s title track, yet here he is, still campaigning on a richly detailed synth-pop LP of admirable sophistication. Here, the *musique concrète* stratagems he deployed while making 2020's, Bandcamp-only modular-synth work *Dunst* underwrite immediate, thematically satisfying songs such as The Idiot, a gorgeous reverie envisaging Iggy and The Dame getting clean in Berlin. Though that's about as wistful as *On Pain* gets, the dystopian new wave of Warm By The Fire and twinkling, vocoder-imbued I Can Hear Everything are equally impressive. Sometime Tears For Fears/Adam & The Ants producer Chris Hughes lent advice and help with overdubs as *On Pain* neared completion, but it's Cole's growing sound design expertise – and ever-unique lyrical voice – that ensure his 40-year career still has legs.

James McNair

Mark Dellas

Sparks

★★★★

The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte

ISLAND. CD/DL/LP/MC

Their 26th album. Whatever they had, they haven't lost.

Now in their sixth decade of releasing albums and soon to headline the Hollywood Bowl, the biggest show of their career, it's hard to think of a band who, for all their sales fluctuations, have been so consistently outstanding for so long. *The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte* echoes 1982's *Angst In My Pants* (the title track), *Propaganda* (the super-exuberant Nothing Is As Good As They Say It Is) and even 1988's *Interior Design* (We Go Dancing, which namechecks Skrillex and Kim Jong Un), without sounding like they're replaying themselves, and they've never clattered as much as they do on The Mona Lisa's Packing, Leaving Late Tonight. Ron Mael's lyrics are elegiac, witty and forensically detailed ("then, your sweater caught my shopping cart"); Russell Mael delivers them exquisitely and they specialise in ear worms. How on earth do they do it?

John Aizlewood

Big Big Train

★★★★

Ingenious Devices

ENGLISH ECCENTRIC. CD/DL/LP

Veteran proggers soup up the back catalogue with Abbey Road strings.

Just as the prog-minded bands of yore – The Nice, Procol Harum – liked to book an orchestra when the accountant allowed, so Big Big Train have amplified the drama on three of their epics with a dose of fiddles. Most heavily symphonised is Brooklands, where the pulsing strings supercharge this celebration of the vintage days of motor racing. East Coast Racer acquires a grander climax and a typically well-judged guitar solo from Dave Gregory. Better? Well, different. The already magnificent Voyager is more lightly burnished. In between comes Ingenious Devices, a brief and lovely new string piece with a Barber's Adagio vibe. On the reworked tracks the original vocals of the late David Longdon are used, but on a live version of Atlantic Cable, recorded last year, new singer Alberto Bravin sounds up to the job. A stop-gap of a release but worthwhile.

John Bungey

Desire Marea

★★★★

On The Romance Of Being

MUTE. CD/DL/LP

South African's remarkable confluence of symphonic soul and spiritual quest.

As one half of the duo FAKA, Marea tapped the Durban-born bass-heavy style of house known as gqom and the realities of being Zulu and queer in a post-apartheid world. 2020's solo debut *Desire* was a huge leap into a more anguished avant-electronic zone, and this follow-up is another game-changer; via a 13-piece ensemble, often recorded live for maximum impact, immersed in soul, jazz and Afro-folk roots inspired by Marea's training as a Sangoma, or spiritual healer. The mood is joyous, a breakthrough of light after his first LP's claustrophobic dark, but the music still leaves scorched earth wherever it goes: Ezulwini's fierce chanson, Be Free's polyrhythmic rock, Mfula's orchestrated opera, Banzi's charge into freaky be-bop. Throughout, Marea hollers, croons and wails, another supreme instrument in the mission to break on through to the other side.

Martin Aston

Rhoda Dakar

★★★★

Version Girl

SUNDAY BEST. CD/DL/LP

Former Bodysnatchers/The Special AKA singer returns after a nine-year break.

Rhoda Dakar is carrying on the great reggae tradition of making a covers LP. It's bookended by great-in-spirit readings of the Dandy Livingstone title track and Nick Lowe's Peace, Love And Understanding. The former, featuring emcee Natty Campbell, is reworked over an Amapiano background, it's all bubbling synths and percussive rhythms. The second-named frames Dakar's rousing call to arms with Wailers-style roots reggae-rock. In-between, The Kinks/Pretenders' Stop Your Sobbing becomes an organ-driven boss reggae number. Her lovers rock take on Patsy Cline's Walking After Midnight further strengthens reggae and country's fine romance, and who could have predicted that Morrissey's Everyday Is Like Sunday would sound like an out-take from The Special AKA's *In The Studio* when reworked as rocksteady with woozy horns?

Lois Wilson

Beach Fossils

★★★

Bunny

BAYONET. CD/DL/LP

First LP in six years from New York dream-pop four-piece.

When this writer spoke to Beach Fossils founder and frontman Dustin Payseur back in 2017, around the release of his band's third studio LP, *Somersault*, he was keen to explain the influence of Daoism on his own outlook. "It's about trying not to force things and just letting them come to you," he explained. "It's [all] already in there." As Payseur was no doubt aware, he could easily have been describing his own group's summer psych sound, a solitary unforced presence, removed from the outside world. Recorded with guitarist Tommy Davidson, bassist Jack Doyle Smith and drummer Anton Hochheim, *Bunny*, by contrast, showcases a far more structured and distinct-sounding Beach Fossils. Payseur's vocals might still sound diaphanous, his lyrics still concerned with small moments of sadness and pleasure, but there is now a structured professionalism here that will delight some old fans and confound others.

Andrew Male

Metallica

★★★★

72 Seasons

BLACKENED. CD/DL/LP

Back to core-values on their first album in six years.

"Full speed or nothing!" growls Metallica's James Hetfield on Lux Æterna, a prime example of *72 Seasons*' astonishing vigour. Seventy-four minutes-plus of bile, angst, relentlessly inventive riffage and battering ram at the castle door-drums, it's Metallica with bells on, though not literally. Greg Fidelman's Sensurround co-production places us at the forge, and several songs (Screaming Suicide; Sleepwalk My Life Away) end with band members approving the hot take they've just nailed. Elsewhere, Kirk Hammett's wah wah shredding on You Must Burn! is combustible, and Inamorata isn't a love song, it's Hetfield declaring "Misery, she loves me" while the band come on like Sabbath doing Children Of The Revolution. 'Biggest metal band in the world' is a weighty mantle, but Metallica are worthy again. They're relevant again, too, hence their recent New Yorker profile.

James McNair

Capital gains: Fatoumata Diawara knows exactly where her roots are.

Shelby Duncan

Westway to the world

With a little help from friends including Damon Albarn and Angie Stone, Mali's brightest star pushes forward. By David Hutcheon.

Fatoumata Diawara

★★★★

London KO

WAGRAM. CD/DL/LP

"WHEN YOU know where your roots are, you know where you are," Diawara told MOJO in 2018, in advance of her second album, *Fenfo* – her discography is extensive, but *London KO* is only the third album to feature her name front, centre and solo. "You can go to different countries, visit different cultures, but you have to know where your roots are." Bamako may be a long way from a recording studio in the shadow of London's Westway, then, but it's never been more obvious that the Malian singer knows exactly where she is.

A brief recap: Diawara came to our attention as a stage-stealing backing singer/dancer with Oumou Sangaré but had a history in street theatre and film; her debut LP, 2011's *Fatou*, suggested a Laurel Canyon-style singer-songwriter. After that, however, she built her multi-disciplinary contacts book working with a cast of A-listers. Cuban jazz with Roberto Fonseca; soundtracking a Google documentary on the digitising of manuscripts in Timbuktu; the award-winning film Timbuktu itself; an African history play in Paris with music by Damon Albarn? She's got the T-shirt.

And it's that last connection that provides the gateway to *London KO*. Trading appearances with Albarn's Africa Express and Gorillaz, Diawara recruited him to compose, play and co-produce six of the 14 tracks. He brings the London, she supplies the KO. Their opening salvo, Nsera, appeared online shortly before last year's football World Cup in Qatar, its video interspersing joyful scenes of life in Africa with shots of a blood-soaked sphere.

But something notable about Albarn's tracks is how hard they are to pick out from the others. Anyone thinking he is the Machiavellian genius munificently bestowing his magic would be advised to turn to Blues, a spiritual rumba graced by Fonseca on piano but powered along by Alune Wade's bass and Yves William Ombe Monkama's percussion. Or Sete, on which Diawara is given wings by the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. Another former collaborator, French pop renaissance man -M-, adds guitar to a couple of tracks; Will Calhoun plays drums; and Angie Stone is on great form on Somaw.

If Diawara and Albarn had to be at the top of their game to thrive in this company, they save the best for the home stretch: Dambe (just voice and synths, a thumping digital bass) is the only arrangement that sounds like something Albarn had prepared earlier; Maya adds a string quartet and sends you hastily to the replay button. Each of the 14 tracks suggests something Diawara may want to explore on her next album. She won't. Her head may be somewhere between W10 and Wassoulou right now, but she knows where her roots are.

Jess Williamson ventures further down the open road.

Jess Williamson

★★★★

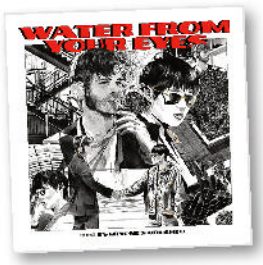
Time Ain't Accidental

MEXICAN SUMMER. CD/DL/LP

Texan singer-songwriter weathers emotional storms on fifth album.

THROWING IN a Raymond Carver reference on the first song of her new album, Jess Williamson makes it clear she has a story to tell. It's one of heavy heartbreak, long-distance relationships and love rediscovered – an old tale, but one she embellishes in electric style. Following her 2020 album *Sorceress* and her fine 2022 collaboration with Waxahatchee's Katie Crutchfield as Plains, *Time Ain't Accidental* has a blazing confidence, even as Williamson sings "I've been thrown to the wolves/And they ate me raw" on the spacey yet hopeful taillights-fade of Hunter. Her lyrical skills allow her to steer the record off Americana's more clogged highways – especially with the title track's erotic heatstroke – while Topanga Two Step's hints of Roxy Music and the dark carnival rhythms of Something's In The Way push her further onto the open road, further ahead of the pack.

Victoria Segal



Water From Your Eyes

★★★★

Everyone's Crushed

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP

Uncompromising but inspired collage-pop chaos.

First conceived as a "sad dance band", this New York-via-Chicago duo have evolved across five albums into a most inspired avant-pop proposition. Their anarchic cut'n'paste confections can baffle on first exposure, but with repeat listens the inventiveness of their composition comes to the fore, savvy hooks materialising from the seeming chaos of loops and samples. This ability to wrangle pop from chaos is particularly impressive given the uncompromising source material, Barley juggling taut Mother Sky bass lines, disjointed bottle-slide licks and delirious synth skronk, while the title track layers dense polyrhythms and microphone feedback that squawks like free jazz saxophone. Amid the tumult, vocalist Rachel Brown is ever focused and artfully poised. On the aching chamber-pop-from-another-dimension of 14, she evokes the understated, affectless vocals of The Pastels' Katrina Mitchell, a poignantly human presence haunting the glitches and loops.

Stevie Chick

Jackie Lee Young

JIM

★★★★

Love Makes Magic

VICIOUS CHARM. CD/DL/LP

UK dance veteran's unexpectedly blissful immersion in rock'n'roots.

As co-founder of Crazy P, remixer and DJ Ron Basejam, Jim Baron has been a dance scene fixture for three decades, but an increasing predilection for acoustic guitar and harmonies has led here: to the comedown soundtrack after the party. The way *Love Makes Magic*'s opening Across The Street could have been lifted from CSN&Y's *Déjà Vu* is uncanny, but gifted mimicry is not Baron's only attribute; the melodies breathe and sigh, arrangements have a silky consistency and his plaintive voice also convinces. The net is cast wider than '70s California too, back around to Baron's own backyard – Where The Leaves Are Falling has an aura of Albion, drifting on a mist of mellotron; Oxygen's springboard of folk-funk (think Hot Chip); The Ballad Of San Marino's progressive soul (think Beth Orton). The closing title track returns to the CSNY motherlode, but Baron has made enough magic by then for his own music to stand apart.

Martin Aston

Hand Habits

★★★

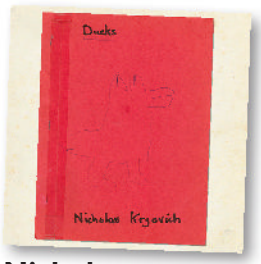
Sugar The Bruise

FAT POSSUM. CD/DL/LP

Diversity is key to a new beginning for Meg Duffy.

The first release for a new label by former Wars On Drugs and Weyes Blood associate Meg Duffy's musical vehicle opens with Something Wrong – gun-shot percussion beds a gospel-esque anthem. Further in, Andy In Stereo filters Judee Sill through an electro-glitch lens. Near the end, The Book On How To Change is a jazzy, sax-and vibes-coloured instrumental. The six-track *Sugar The Bruise* has a spontaneity embracing the poppy elements of 2021's last Hand Habits outing *Fun House* while sitting this alongside the introspection of its two predecessors. The past folkiness is eschewed: with its assorted flavours, *Sugar The Bruise* appears to consciously push against the past; an inference reinforced by lyrics tackling an awareness that endings result in beginnings. Duffy is setting out multiple paths and, based on what's here, it's impossible to guess which could follow next.

Kieron Tyler



Nicholas Krgovich

★★★★

Ducks

ORINDAL. DL/LP

Intimate collection of solo 4-track recordings from the Vancouver, BC singer.

Continuing the mood of solitary interior observation established on his recent collaborations with multi-instrumentalist Joseph Shabason and guitarist Chris Harris, this collection of home recordings from Krgovich is a conceptual salute to the pleasures of the mundane and prosaic. It's a concept LP about what might be best described as "the ongoing moment", that ability to pause the present, observe it like a photo and, in that pausing, appreciate the world differently. There is a subtext here, of combatting loneliness in the wake of a break-up and finding ways to carry on alone, but the presiding mood is one of cautious joy, enhanced by Krgovich's stripped-back arrangements which suggest the pop demos of Arthur Russell or the whispered confessionals of Yo La Tengo located within the attenuated West Coast sunlight of the Beach Boys' *Friends* LP. Pause the world and step inside.

Andrew Male

Califone

★★★★

Villagers

JEALOUS BUTCHER. CD/DL/LP

Chicago's post-folk lifers construct a quiet classic.

For everyone who adored Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, Califone should've been the next logical destination. Over 25 years, Tim Rutili and his shifting cohort have been working in a similar zone, where understated folk rock is atomised and reconfigured against a backdrop of digital decay. But a run of superb early-noughties LPs failed to attract the *YHF* dollars, leaving Rutili to soldier on as a more niche concern. *Villagers* is approximately the tenth Califone LP, and a great one to start with, as Rutili's low-key aesthetic opens up to allow horns, strings, and some discreetly grand piano lines into the brittle soundscapes. Cranked guitars in McMansions and the soulful burn of Comedy contain echoes of Rutili's '90s alt-blues roots in Red Red Meat. But mostly, *Villagers* lives in its own hermetic and compelling space; it's not too late to pay a visit.

John Mulvey

Cowboy Junkies

★★★

Such Ferocious Beauty

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

Evolution not revolution once again.

In hindsight, Cowboy Junkies were always too wedded to their template of Michael Timmins's introspective glacial songs, and his sister Margo's unerring ability to coat them with icy vulnerability, to properly break through. But as they approach their 40th anniversary, this first LP of new material since 2020's *Ghosts* finds them in an intriguing place. *Ghosts* dealt with the Timmins siblings' mother's approaching death, while here the desperately moving What I Lost deals with the last months of their father's late-life dementia. Margo's deep, stentorian tones have remained almost unchanged since 1986's *Whites Off Earth Now!!* and Hell Is Real could have graced that LP. Even so, there's real evolution, from the eyebrow-raising guitar squall on Flood, to the frenetic drumming which propels Shadows, while Throw A Match begins with the verve of a lost Buddy Holly tune.

John Aizlewood

Altered estate

Quitting the dancefloor, Noel turns in his best post-Oasis album. By Tom Doyle.

Round his way: Noel Gallagher plays to his strengths.

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

★★★★

Council Skies

SOUR MASH. CD/DL/LP

FOR A GOOD while now, Noel Gallagher seems to have been keen to leave his acoustic guitar locked in its case. Arguably the highlight of his last album, 2017's *Who Built The Moon?*, was strummy ballad Dead In The Water, recorded live in a Dublin radio studio and hidden away as a bonus track, like a slightly shameful secret, after his experiments with glammy stomp and trip-hop.

Gallagher's subsequent three EPs released between 2019-20 seemed to reinforce the point that he was determined to push back against what he was best at. The disco rock moves of Black Star Dancing and This Is The Place were a bit like someone deciding to put on a Hawaiian shirt that didn't really suit them. Advance warning that this iffy period might be over came last year with the release of the demos of two songs from *Council Skies*: the strident guitar pop of We're Gonna Get There In The End and the almost Champagne Supernova-esque Trying To Find A World That's Been And Gone.

The lyric of the latter informs the overarching sentiments of *Council Skies*. In the year he turns 56, Gallagher is both acknowledging that many of the places of his past are either shuttered-up or demolished – notably, the album cover features a Moss Side roundabout that marks the place where Manchester City's Maine Road ground once stood – while at the same time recalling his youthful early-'90s thrills of facing an unknown and possibly brilliant future.

Easy Now, with its balladeering verses bursting into singalong choruses, is stirring stuff, and highlights the inherent empathy contained within many of his best songs. A message for a troubled individual, or someone being left behind, its standout hook, "I'll be there/I'll wait for you, I swear" contains a power that will be manifestly multiplied by huge crowds singing it back at its writer.

Elsewhere, Gallagher further spotlights his newfound love for The Cure (that first surfaced with *Who Built The Moon?*'s It's A Beautiful World) in the propulsive, A Forest-like Pretty Boy, which has already been remixed and rendered even more Cure-like by Robert Smith, who half-timed the tempo from *Seventeen Seconds* to *Disintegration*.

Along the way, there are stylistic diversions that are more subtle: the soul rhythm and gospel vocal support of I'm Not Giving Up Tonight; the Prince-like (specifically Raspberry Beret) shapes of Open The Door, See What You Find. Best of all is the lovely Dead To The World, with its jazzy chords and '60s filmic strings (which even Liam, on Twitter, grudgingly acknowledged with the backhanded compliment, "How can such a mean spirited little man write such a beautiful song?").

All in all, then, *Council Skies* is very much a creative success. It's the sound of Noel Gallagher pushing onwards, while once again playing to his strengths.

Matt Crockett

House Of All

★★★★

House Of All

TINY GLOBAL PRODUCTIONS. CD/DL/LP

Fall alumni supergroup rejoin the Psycho Mafia.

Fall autocrat Mark E Smith's been gone five years, but his vibrations live on in Yard Act, The Cool Greenhouse and other wired-up speech-singers. Manchester's House Of All offer a more holistic re-connection. Fall co-founder Martin Bramah, who's long maintained an alternative branch of Fall-ness with The Blue Orchids, leads distinguished ex-inmates including presiding bassist Steve Hanley over recordings dubbed "a private séance". Welcome echoes include Bramah's sinister, cogent non sequiturs and the contorted, sharp-edged rock sounds, and the urge to interpret everything as a reference to MES becomes flesh with the spectral/beefy Harlequin Duke ("Maybe our Bingo-Master has returned?"). A celebratory salute to a worldview and a method rather than a tribute act, it is, of course, not The Fall. But to adapt one of the most well-worn chestnuts of Fall-commentary, it does seem that Granny is on bongos.

Ian Harrison

Damian Lewis

★★★

Mission Creep

DECCA. CD/DL/LP

Homeland actor's authentic, rootsy debut album.

In the ever-variable tradition of actors making records, Homeland/Billions star Damian Lewis is of the authenticity-seeking variety – ie, he's more Billy Bob Thornton than David Hasselhoff. This means covers of Harvest Moon and, more predictably but more successfully, J.J. Cale's After Midnight, plus a clutch of warm, slightly jazzy originals in a similar rootsy vein. His voice is gently grizzled, whether adding grit to the otherwise supper-club Wanna Grow Old In Paris or wigging out with reasonable conviction on She Comes. Lyrically, he's a touch too desperate for edge on Soho Tango ("you took me to the toilet, gave me coke," indeed); he seems to have a car accident in Makin' Plans, and there's an all-round surfeit of sexual tension. But when everything gels on the excellent Down On The Bowery and Zaragoza, it's really quite, yes, authentic.

John Aizlewood

Rival Sons

★★★

Darkfighter

LOW COUNTRY SOUND/ATLANTIC. CD/DL/LP

LP seven explores "the cultural mitosis of isolation".

The first of two newies from Long Beach, California's Rival Sons (companion LP *Lightbringer* arrives late 2023), *Darkfighter*'s palpable '70s hard rock pedigree is agreeably refurbished by Scott Holiday's use of daring, Jack White and Tom Morello-ish lead-guitar tones. Frontman Jay Buchanan's lyrics can be less prepossessing, though, non-sequiturs and tautology – "Pretty soon you're going to get where you're going," notes the LP's title track – sometimes tripping him up. Buchanan's voice is special, however; agile and gutsy on psych work-out Horse's Breath, raucous bobsleigh ride Nobody Wants To Die, and The Kinks go Rage Against The Machine on Bird In The Hand. Suited and booted, twice Grammy-nominated, and here benefiting from the up-front production of Dave Cobb (Jason Isbell; Slash), Rival Sons sound stadia-ready. All they need now is a decipherable message.

James McNair

Brown Spirits

★★★

Solitary Transmissions

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Melbourne quartet's no-fi New Age Traveller jams.

This mysterious Antipodean combo lands on these shores minus any personnel breakdwn, just this instrumentals-only debut whose influences – Can at their most percussive, the muscular post-punk dub-funk of Jah Wobble's Human Condition, and jazz-fusion (*Bitches Brew*, minus the horns) – are writ large. BS might almost have been concocted by a focus group out to create the perfect band for hipsters; the only thing they forgot to factor in was rehearsal time, as *Solitary Transmissions*' six extra-hairy improv pieces (plus one Pharoah Sanders-y overture) seem to coalesce before your very ears. The embryonic vibe and primordially scuzzy production are both part of its allure: Dead End Exits stampedes like prime-time Hawkwind, while 13-minute finale Who's At The Door fluctuates amid drum rolls, synth washes, FX-guitar squiggles and no actual musical substance, yet transmits blissfulness. As such, you can imagine these Spirits slaying one of Glastonbury's outlying after-hours stages.

Andrew Perry

FILTER ALBUMS

King Krule, AKA Archy Marshall, now with added muscle.

King Krule

★★★★

Space Heavy

XL. CD/DL/LP

Archy Marshall, now 28, keeps reaching for the sky.

AFTER 2017'S INEFFABLE double-helping *The Ooz*, Marshall became a somewhat elusive millennial's darling, fawned over by Kanye, busting out volatile, unpredictable tracks which somehow felt like wheel reinvention. Having since started a family up North, his fourth exercise in outside-the-box songwriting was dreamt up on trains to and from his native Peckham, often explicitly replicating a young parent's sleep-deprived zombie-state. Flimsier opens on familiar turf, its arpeggiated twang, jazz changes and vinegary grumble imagining Jamie T fronting Slint, while Pink Shell and Hamburgerphobia lurch with Marshall's uniquely fierce post-punk energy. In hazier slo-mo moments, fresh miracles arise: Seaforth's Meat Puppets-like dreamy picking supports exquisite shadowed voicing, where a father ponders his fragile infant ("maybe this faith is all I have"), before seagulls and ocean waves blissfully encroach. Deep into side two, Cocteau Twins-esque female trilling tops Seagirl, the title track briefly goes bossa nova, and When Vanishing suddenly produces, magician-like, posh strings. Another mesmerising, profound, excellent record.

Andrew Perry

Frank Lebon

Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit

★★★★

Weathervanes

SOUTHEASTERN/THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Unstoppable country rocker's eighth album with his 'Crazy Horse'.

The astonishing run of multi-award-winning music by Isbell since 2013's *Southeastern* shows no sign of abating on *Weathervanes*. Little may have changed sound-wise in that time – it's a familiar mix of delicate acoustic tracks and crunching country rock – but The 400 Unit has evolved via the deepening emotional heft of their leader's songwriting. So where *Southeastern* was sometimes halting in the wake of Isbell's then-new sobriety, *Weathervanes* comes from a more stable yet still fragile life as father and husband. The likes of Volunteer and White Beretta still linger on the same themes of escaping low familial expectations as, say, 2015 track Children Of Children, but the present is also examined in Death Wish's relationship defined by depression, while Middle Of The Morning offers an apology to those around him for the creative process's inherent solipsism. Looks like Isbell's going to need a bigger trophy cabinet.

Andy Fyfe

Squid

★★★★

O Monolith

WARP. CD/DL/LP

Brighton-based post-everything unit find focus on second album.

Squid's debut suggested a group in possession of more ideas than was necessarily good for them, and this follow-up is no less restless. But, having left producer Dan Carey's basement studio for Peter Gabriel's Real World, Squid's wayward invention has had space to breathe, adding a new confidence and coherence to their defiant leaps of faith. *O Monolith* is no less bold of palette – opener Swing (In A Dream) embraces taut post-punk chug, jazz trumpet and enveloping synths – but always follows a lucid, compelling logic. Sitting surer within the frenetic sonic mix, drummer/vocalist Ollie Judge drives the moody funk of Undergrowth with subterranean babble and invests its rhythmically complex prog-punk with urban paranoia. The chaos remains but, like kindreds Black Midi, Squid have learnt to better channel the inner tumult, to focus their effect. It's a discipline that pays considerable dividends here.

Stevie Chick

Dudu Tassa & Jonny Greenwood

★★★★

Jarak Qaribak

WORLD CIRCUIT. CD/DL/LP

Israeli rocker, Radiohead/Smile stalwart and collaborators' beguiling portal to the Middle Eastern pop songbook.

The album title, translated from the Arabic as 'your neighbour is your friend', is certainly apt for a project that assembles guest vocalists from as far afield as Morocco, Dubai and Iraq, each tackling a time-honoured song from a country other than their own. Supported by long-time friends Tassa and Greenwood's shimmering mirage of guitars, electronics and drum machines, alongside traditional strings, woodwind and percussion, what might have been blithe 'orientalist' world music succeeds by keeping everything rigorously in service of the nine, sultrily mellifluous songs. Dulcet charm abounds, but standouts include the tumbling, flute-decorated Ashufak Shay, an Emirati devotional achingly emoted by Lebanese singer Rashid al-Najjar, Egyptian Ahmed Doma's slow-burning take on 1940s Algerian lament Djit Nishrab, and an exhilarated reading of traditional Jordanian song Ya 'Anid Ya Yaba, sinuously embellished by honey-toned Syrian vocalist Lynn Adib. Harmonious stuff, in every sense.

David Sheppard

Rain Parade

★★★

Last Rays Of A Dying Sun

FLATIRON/LABEL 51. CD/DL/MC

Back 40 years after their debut masterpiece, there's little rain on the new parade.

The key to Rain Parade's identity as one of the Paisley Underground's touchstones becomes clearest again at the centre of these 11 songs, their first set of new studio work in almost four decades. In slot five, there's Got The Fear, where the anxious riff that unspools beneath a church bell's toll sets up a tense anthem about senescence, irrelevance, and surveillance states. As the laser-sharp solo scatters across the tune, you may glance over your shoulder, searching for a pursuer. But Share Your Love, in slot six, is pure sublimation, an acoustic beauty about stepping through the dark to look for the light, beyond heartbreak and into hope. Sure, the age is clear in the voices of Matt Piucci and Steven Roback, but so is the honesty inside songs that mine lost brothers, opportunities, and time. The layers and harmonies remain exquisite, befitting the long tail of their bygone pop-weirdo enclave.

Grayson Haver Currin

Kassi Valazza

★★★★

Kassi Valazza Knows Nothing

LOOSE. CD/DL/LP

A staunch alt-folk-country companion in heavy-heartedness.

Chiming with today's *Zeitgeist*, stoicism if not fatalism is the sanest coping mechanism, and it runs deep in the DNA of folk, country and their alts. In that pensive, even passive register, Oregon-resident Kassi Valazza is a poetically limpid lyricist whose tolling voice recalls Tarnation's Paula Frazer, Judy Collins, even Grace Slick. Indeed, Watching Planes Go By lifts off in its West Coast acid-rock instrumental break thanks to her backing band from Portland's TK & The Holy Know-Nothings, and in its cool observation of a third person stands among her songs which mostly address a 'you' not always a lover. It's the stand-out on this excellent successor to her 2019 debut *Dear Dead Days* and two subsequent EPs. Rapture is more typical of the 10 songs here in its slow-burn mood, embracing you like a sorrowful but kind-hearted friend.

Mat Snow

Faizal Mostrixx

★★★★

Mutations

GLITTERBEAT. CD/DL/LP

Breakthrough third album from a stalwart of the Kampala electronica scene.

Like the 1998 Beck classic with which it shares its title, moonlighting choreographer Faizal Mostrixx's *Mutations* puts a beguiling twist on some familiar musical DNA strands. While there is nothing new about the idea of stitching together a cappella vocal fragments with high-tensile dance beats, the deft execution of opener Onions And Love (in which the lovelorn solo vocal of an Ethiopian sous-chef is teamed with wonky polyrhythms) captivates the listener from the start, and from then on Mostrixx's production runs the stylistic gamut without ever falling off. The title track and no less frenetic – though confusingly not drum'n'bass – companion piece Tunes Of The Jungle verge on east African footwork, while the killer disco bass line emerging from upfront marimba jam Loosely (featuring Lesotho's most-likely-to Morena Leraba) is a moment Cornershop would have been proud of.

Ben Thompson

Kassa Overall

★★★★

Animals

WARP. CD/DL/LP

Genre-vaulting Seattleite's jazz and hip-hop-informed triumph.

You can't pigeonhole Kassa Overall. An Oberlin-trained percussionist who has collaborated with Roy Hargrove, Yoko Ono and Arto Lindsay, he's also a visionary hip-hop beatmaker and rapper, and a composer whose lucid, shape-shifting music transverses genre boundaries. His last album, 2020's *I Think I'm Good*, was a jarring, impressionistic interrogation of his struggles with manic episodes and time spent in a psychiatric hospital. This more ambitious follow-up finesses the jagged edges and corrals his wild creativity into fully realised, coherent tracks, but that thematic weight remains a potent factor. Here, Overall's restless ingenuity is always in service of the song, confessing "music is my therapist" on Make My Way Back Home's Soulquarians-esque odyssey, or meditating on loneliness over mutated Latin jazz on the bruised, poignant So Happy. The result is a bold, career highlight that's dizzyingly inventive on the surface, with a powerful emotional undertow.

Stevie Chick

Billy Woods And Kenny Segal

★★★★

Maps

BACKWOODZ. CD/DL/LP

NYC rapper and LA producer's second duo LP explores travel via the darkest vistas.

Since 2012's heavy hitting treatise on racism *History Will Absolve Me* saved him from obscurity, Billy Woods has made each new album a discrete experiment. The Gotham rapper's crafted, novelistic raps and singular voice appeal to old-schoolers and suit Segal's flighty fractal beats – all spacey jazz, see-sawing synths, stuttering rhythms and razored hooks – his concerns darker and deeper than on 2019's *Hiding Places*. Whether riding Soundcheck's rippling Rhodes and low-slung bass lines or Hangman's muffled piano keys and dying tuba synths, Woods's ever shifting, loosely travel-oriented raps cover much ground, working in powerful contrast to Danny Brown's strangulated nasal yell, ShrapKnel's hard lines and Elucid's dissociative raps on its standout duets. A tightly coiled album, covering 17 tracks in 45 minutes, *Maps* leaves much to unpick.

Andy Cowan

Delphine Dora

★★★★

As Above, So Below

RECITAL. DL/LP

French multi-instrumentalist conjures choral ghosts from voice and piano manipulations.

Many of the releases by this Paris-born pianist and vocal improviser have been concerned with the beauty of language, whether reworking the poetry of Sylvia Plath, Walt Whitman and Kathleen Raine or creating her own stream-of-consciousness vocabularies that blur the line between the prosaic and the mystical. For her debut release on Sean McCann's Recital label, she limits herself to a single work, Candice Spirituel by Romantic German poet Novalis. Around her whispered six-minute recital of this epic poem, concerned with the intensified transcendental experience of being close to death, Dora spins ephemeral patterns of wordless voice and piano. Under the auspices of producer and arranger Andrew Chalk, these bittersweet, drifting melodies blend seamlessly with hovering electronics, clarinet, and field recordings of playgrounds and birdsong, to effortlessly evoke a poignant and fleeting world between worlds.

Andrew Male

Desmond White, Alexander Richter

Billy Woods (left) & Kenny Segal: mapping out new terrain.

Bar Italia

★★★

Tracy Denim

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP

Dark lo-fi pop trio ascend to the indie big time.

The brittle indie-pop of this London trio crackles with the kind of terse honesty you'd eavesdrop in WhatsApp messages between close friends. An underground supergroup marrying Nina Cristante (AKA NINA) to Jezmi Tarik Fehmi and Sam Fenton of esoteric noise band Double Virgo, their Matador debut follows a handful of homemade CD-Rs, singles and limited-run LPs. The label move has seen no major monkeying with the formula: bedsit pop enervated by minor-key guitar chugs and sparse synths which are often over before you've unravelled their riddles. The interplay between their vocals is tense and compelling, suggesting early Blonde Redhead. Their lyrics, meanwhile, are mysterious knots of angst, painting a world of twenty-something confusion, paranoia and embarrassment that has a certain grimy allure.

Stevie Chick

Matthew Herbert & London Contemporary Orchestra

★★★

The Horse

MODERN RECORDINGS/BMG. CD/DL/LP

Visceral equine experiment from art-music polymath.

Sometime electronic enabler for the likes of Björk and Mica Levi, Matthew Herbert's compositional projects have included everything from an LP of pig samples to avant-garde big band jazz. Here, he explores corporeal materiality, literally building music from a horse cadaver, using instrument-makers to construct bone flutes and percussion, then coupling these with psycho-geographic field recordings captured in stallion-emblazoned Palaeolithic caves and at the Epsom location of suffragette Emily Davison's trampling by King George V's racehorse. The results are often ascetic yet hauntingly elemental and atavistic – the sound of primitive pelvic lyres and horse-skin drums invoking the very beginnings of human music-making. Things grow more euphoric on later orchestral and electronically enhanced essays – notably the mesmeric The Rider (Not The Horse) – primordial dance music from a different kind of disc jockey.

David Sheppard

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN

Alex LoRe & Weirdear

★★★★

Evening Will Find Itself

WHIRLWIND. CD/DL/LP

Outside-the-box alto saxophonist's second quartet LP blurs the lines between composition and improvisation.

After making his mark with Lucas Pino, Marta Sanchez and his Kind Folk collective, LoRe's probing, self-assured style shines on his most philosophical outing. Opener Stripes sets out its stall, Glenn Zaleski's piano phrase offset by its left-hand counterpart before LoRe's sax embarks on unexpected journeys, while Face Unseen explores a mournful melody with more twists than an Agatha Christie over a sparser, more contained backing. Written after nearly losing his father to Covid-19, Underground And Back's wide intervals and slippery harmonies nod closely to LoRe's mentor Bunky Green. Elsewhere, traces of Ambrose Akinmusire (Fauxlosophy) and Paul Motian (Silent Ship) poke through. Throughout, Weirdear flirt with normalcy, toy with classicism, mix in abstraction and trump with surprise, intense narrative arcs revealing new layers with every listen.

ALSO RELEASED

Snazzback

★★★★

Ruins Everything

WORM DISCS. DL/LP

An eclectic Bristol septet who revel in the freedom to explore, Snazzback's third LP ladles on the surrealist touches. A meditation on the strangeness of modern life by way of neo-soul, mesmeric polyrhythms, hip-hop and '70s alt-jazz, their reconstructed collages peak amid Stokes Croft Sleep Clinic's twisting horns and In Tides' speedy tumult (with an incisive rap from Grove). Seeking evolved left-of-centre jazz? Look no further.

Samuel Blaser

★★★★

Routes

ENJA. CD/DL/LP

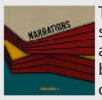
Known for his chameleonic approach, this Swiss-born trombonist's tribute to Don Drummond's reggae- and ska-infused Jamaican jazz is an even split of originals and covers. From a smouldering Silver Dollar to a laid-back Green Island via the skanking swagger of Chronicles, a great cast list (including Carroll Thompson, Soweto Kinch and the late Lee 'Scratch' Perry) back up Blaser's robust lyrical multiphonics with gusto. An unabashed joy.

Duncan Eagles

★★★★

Narrations

ROPEADOPE. CD/DL



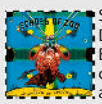
The Londoner's second solo set away from Partikel boasts seven originals that are a study in contrasts. Be it the warm reflections and modal modulations of Suburbiton, predicated on Tomasz Bura's outstanding piano fills, or the driving high-tempo funk of The Bakehouse, there's an appealing dryness to Eagles' tenor tone. Whether toying with sensitive extemporisations or trilling with Coltrane-like urgency, his nimble songs hide a surprise around every turn.

Echoes Of Zoo

★★★★

Speech Of Species

W.E.R.F. DL/LP



Saxophonist Nathan Daems' attitudinal Belgian collective continue to turn animal fascinations into sound. The scuzzy funk and Balkan riffology of Bee Jive and untamed thrust of Call Of The Quagga Quagga live up to their titles, Daems' love of an adrenalised hook matched by a restless fusion of West African grooves, '60s psychedelia and Gypsy swing not a million miles adrift from Melt Yourself Down. *AC*

FILTER ALBUMS

This Is The Kit's Kate Stables: mindful of the underdog.

This Is The Kit

★★★★

Careful Of Your Keepers

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

Gruff Rhys-produced sixth album from Paris-based singer-songwriter and band.

NOBODY COULD accuse Kate Stables of romanticising the world around her: there's a song on this record called Scab-by Head And Legs, inspired by a pigeon nesting on her window ledge. "How can we exist?/How can we know how to do this?" she sings in fellowship with this scrappy survivor, questions underpinning the album's gnomic meditations. With a band that includes Rozi Plain on bass, Stables unfolds tight-packed, origami-like songs, More Change and Doomed Or More Doomed echoing Cassandra Jenkins or Big Thief's folk-refracted mindfulness. Through brass flourishes and fluttery post-rock rhythms, there's a sense of rushing to keep up with the hop and skip of glitchy real-time thought processes, whether gnawing anxiety (Goodbye Bite) or universe-dwarfed wonder (This Is When The Sky Gets Big). It's a hard world for little things, pigeon or human: these songs fight to ease the way.

Victoria Segal

Baxter Dury

★★★★

I Thought I Was Better Than You

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

His Hammersmith coldwave tilt at Dr Dre's *The Chronic*.

Baxter Dury's 2021 memoir, Chaise Longue, was a godsend for fans of his six records hitherto, 'explaining' their son-of-Blockhead backstory of sketchy parenting and, as 2019 single Slumlord memorably put it, "scary people saying silly shit". Along the way, Dury Jr's music has blossomed from 2002's lo-fi Blur-isms to latterday Gainsbourg & Birkin orchestrated duetting. Here, it evolves again towards the minimal West Coast hip-hop which soundtracked his hooligan runnings in the '90s – think Dre, Tupac, Warren G – complete with tinny synth lines, and a contemporary Tyler, The Creator zing finessed by Charli XCX producer Paul White. Against this unforgivingly crisp backdrop, our hero delivers some of his harshest lines, most notably this from the female chorus on closer Shadow: "No one will get over that you're someone's son" – a song co-written, what's more, with his own teenage "nepo-baby", Kosmo. *I Thought…*, however, is Baxter's third cracking album in a row, a consistency which eluded even papa Ian.

Andrew Perry

Cedric Oberlin

Kayhan Kalhor And Toumani Diabaté

★★★★

The Sky Is The Same Colour Everywhere

REAL WORLD. CD/DL/LP

Persian and Mandé cultures collide for a spiritual meditation.

After meeting and performing (without rehearsal) at a German festival seven years ago, the Iranian kamancheh maestro and Malian kora king took the spirit of their subsequent joint tour into a Parisian studio to record this astonishing set. No clue is given about why it has taken so long to be issued – perhaps they simply did it for their own amusement – but it's worth the wait. Kayhan, who plays the four-string Persian spike fiddle, had heard Diabaté's work on the 21-string calabash lute, but the African had never heard of his collaborator; armed with the title as inspiration, however, they instantly found common ground. Though the single, 52-minute improvised piece is split into nine tracks, each flows into the next – so buy the CD and strike a blow against today's 'track' culture – with the 15-minute The Path Of No Return a highlight.

David Hutcheon

Ultramarine

★★★★

Send And Return

BLACKFORD HILL. DL/LP

Essex techno vets return – in the middle of an estuary.

Even among the esoteric hordes of British electronica in the 1990s, Paul Hammond and Ian Cooper were outliers: flaunting jazz and folk influences from the start; so fannishly keen on Canterbury psych that they recruited both Robert Wyatt and Kevin Ayers to sing for them. English pastoral techno was perhaps their USP, something that this lovely eighth album reasserts. *Send And Return* was recorded on a Thames sailing barge moored in Essex's Blackwater Estuary, and seeks to gently assert a sense of place and atmosphere in its pattering beats and ambient currents, often flecked with sax and flute from jazz musician Greg Heath. It's beguiling stuff and, healthily, never as parochial and overcast as the pitch might suggest: Mirosa and Hydrogen, especially, brilliantly update the bucolic ecstasies of Ultramarine's 1992 landmark, *Every Man And Woman Is A Star.*

John Mulvey

Nico Georis

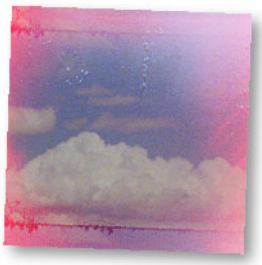
★★★★

Cloud Suites

LEAVING. CD/DL/LP

Classically trained pianist "renders clouds as music."

Georis's route back after a lengthy battle with Lyme disease, *Cloud Suites* saw the Californian compose in real-time while gazing through the windows of the 'Sky Shed', his Big Sur home-cum-studio. Variously evoking *Spiral*-era Vangelis, Linda Perhacs' experimentalism, and elements of Lyle Mays' self-titled 1986 LP, it's an ambient, gently trippy affair wherein cascading keyboard arpeggios fold in upon themselves and warp (Bent Violet), gauzy flute textures come cushioned in soothing analogue hiss (Thermals), and treated piano motifs drift across the firmament (Soft Yellow Gazers). Playful, nostalgic and instantly transporting, *Cloud Suites* employs tape-collage techniques and FM synthesis to help make Georis's wonderment audible, and you soon find yourself adrift in the "feather canyons" that Joni Mitchell described on Both Sides Now. A perfect soundtrack for staring into the middle-distance.



James McNair

WITCH

★★★★

Zango

DESERT DAZED. CD/DL/LP

First album in 39 years from the Zambian rockers.

The initial explosion of fuzz guitar comes as a relief – no, the Zamrockers haven't mellowed; no, their rough edges haven't been ProTooled away. Almost four decades since their previous new recording, and nearly 45 years since frontman Jagari was last in a studio, the WITCH essence runs through *Zango*. Arguably, with two veteran members and four younger, European additions, they are even more noisily rebellious now than they were in the 1970s: Message From WITCH, the closing track, attacks homophobia, anti-semitism and xenophobia; fellow Zambian Sampa The Great brings Avalanche Of Love up to date; and Keith Kabwe (of 1970s peers Amanaz) takes the lead on Nshingilile – which, like opener By The Time You Realise, sounds like an original Zamrock 45. These witches are still burning.

David Hutcheon

The Salt Collective

★★★

Life

PROPELLER SOUND. CD/DL/LP

International alt-rock club's first convention.

There's a professorial solidity to *Life*, assembled by Paris-based trio Salt around contributions from their venerable musical friends. Produced by The dB's' Chris Stamey, each track has the feel of an elegant masterclass, whether it's Juliana Hatfield and Richard Lloyd joining forces on the wired escapism of Where The Wild Things Are or Nada Surf's Matthew Caws and Let's Active's Mitch Easter having a smoke and going into a dream on Another Bus Coming. Further highly effective demonstrations of collegial pop power come on Nursery Rhyme, with Stamey and his dB's compadre Peter Holsapple, Not Going Back's high-speed emotional chase starring Wilco's Pat Sansone, or – keeping the mood of nervous tension – the clapping philosophies of Holsapple's The Pebble In My Hand. The wheel retains its standard form, but these are songs of impressive experience.

Victoria Segal

FOLK

BY JIM WIRTH

Yusuf/Cat Stevens

★★★★

King Of A Land

BMG/DARK HORSE. CD/DL/LP

Twelve years in the making, Yusuf's seventeenth has been worth the wait.

A heartfelt manifesto for a fairer, more compassionate world, *King Of A Land* is an elegant, warmly orchestrated work borne of the same careful shepherding Yusuf and trusted aide Paul Samwell-Smith afforded their 2020-remake of 1970's *Tea For The Tillerman*. Though the Phil Spector-inspired, gospel-infused Highness and musical theatre-indebted, Tchaikovsky-quoting How Good It Feels are obvious showstoppers, Things, a spare, nylon guitar-led ballad with clever modulations, is the album's sleeping giant – especially as it lays bare our 74-year-old host's remarkably hale pipes. With Son Of Mary's vintage synth evoking (Remember The Days Of The) Old Schoolyard, there are flashes of nostalgia here, but the title song eyeballs the future, its child protagonist listing wrongs he'd right if he were king. Nice, too, that *King Of A Land* features Yusuf's grandchildren in their school choir.

James McNair

Bennett Wilson Poole

★★★★

I Saw A Star Behind Your Eyes, Don't Let It Die Away

BWP. CD/DL/LP

One-off UK Americana 'supergroup' becomes a two-fer.

The trio of Robin Bennett (Dreaming Spires; Saint Etienne), Danny Wilson (Danny & The Champions Of The World) and Tony Poole (Starry Eyed & Laughing) was originally intended as a once-only project, but such was the reception for their award-winning self-titled 2018 debut that, well, here we go again. Recorded with a philosophy that if it ain't broke…, this follow-up mixes the same cosmic dust from CSNY, The Beatles, Big Star, The Byrds and, er, The Love Affair, into songs of compassion, tolerance and care. The heartfelt positivity culminates in the Bennett-sung closing track The Sea And The Shore, a gentle, fragile call to resist "The Man wearing Union Jack shoes" (Bennett, not incidentally, is a Green councillor in South Oxfordshire). Poole's ringing Rickenbacker, the trio's rotating lead vocals and close harmonies, and the good vibes throughout make this unexpected album another bright star in the storied collective's firmament.

Andy Fyfe

Pearl & The Oysters

★★★★

Coast 2 Coast

STONES THROW. CD/DL/LP

Paris-via-LA duo re-imagine '70s soft-pop as dreamy space-age exotica.

Like fellow Californians Once & Future Band, Pearl & The Oysters set their controls for the heart of the 1970s. But where the former group robe themselves in proggy, soft-rock excess, the Oysters – Juliette Pearl Davis (vocals/flute/synth) and Joachim Polack (everything else) – are besotted with the eccentricities of exotica, bossa nova and The Carpenters. Their fourth full-length is a playful confection with a charm that goes deeper than kitsch, suggesting Stereolab if they'd foregone politics in favour of happy/sad pop (indeed, Laetitia Sadier cameos on Read The Room). The swooning magic of Space Coast could easily have fit on side two of The Beach Boys' *Friends*, while the delirious harmonies and Wendy Carlos-esque symphonics of Moon Canyon Park are thoroughly bewitching. If the past is a foreign country, the Oysters offer luxury package tours you'd be a fool to resist.

Stevie Chick

Penn Turin, Scott Hukins

Rufus Wainwright: in folk he trusts.

Roseanne Reid

★★★

Lawside

LAST MAN MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Intimate second album from Scots folkster.

Lawside is t he Dundee locale where Roseanne Reid (the daughter of The Proclaimers' Craig), her wife and their baby boy live, and in this articulate collection she salutes her newfound emotional territory too. Reid's is a moody Scots/Appalachian indie-country croon, often deceptively gruff – as on gently-picked opener All I Need, where her delivery simply highlights the depth of feeling: "She don't ever bring me down/She only thinks she does." Call It Love banishes the gruffness, bursting with swaggering brass and a Van Morrison Bright Side Of The Road vibe, Reid's voice husky but girlish. Mona Lisa's buoyant too, a deadpan comedy of drunken mishaps skirling with fiddle, accordion and bodhran. And when Reid lets go more tenderly again, on her son's lullaby Couldn't Wish More For You ("May you love like you've never known loss at all…") you can hear hard-won bliss in the life she's made.

Glyn Brown

Rufus Wainwright

★★★

Folkocracy

BMG. CD/DL/LP

The folk scion gets back to his roots.

Having 'returned' to pop with 2020's *Unfollow The Rules*, Rufus Wainwright has decided to mark his 50th birthday by going deeper into his past and recording an album of (broadly speaking) folk songs, Wild Mountain Thyme, Shenandoah and all. The son of Kate McGarrigle and Loudon Wainwright III, he is undoubtedly steeped in this music, but there is a touch of the Marie Antoinettes about this luxe array of collaborations (Van Dyke Parks, Brandi Carlile, John Legend). If it has little earth under its nails, with any background maid or shepherd perfectly cast and choreographed, there are still plenty of lovely, curious tableaux – among them David Byrne's dreamy appearance on Moondog's High On A Rocky Ledge, or a Nina Simone-inspired Cotton Eyed Joe, featuring Chaka Khan. Even Wainwright's own composition Going To A Town slips under the fence for a downbeat Anohni duet. Let them eat folk – it's delicious.

Victoria Segal

Jim Ghedi & Toby Hay

★★★★

Jim Ghedi & Toby Hay

TOPIC. CD/DL/LP

Fine second outing from UK primitive guitar power couple.

The handsome, windswept Poldark of modern folk, Sheffield's Jim Ghedi mixes traditional song, righteous polemic and ruminative instrumental pieces while 'giving' revival hunk Barry Dransfield. 2021's excellent *In The Furrows Of Common Place* was fated to come into the world at around the same time as the Delta variant, but if Covid put careers on hold, it gave Ghedi time to make a second collaborative piece with Welsh guitarist Toby Hay, following 2018's *The Hawksworth Grove Sessions*. With Ghedi on six strings and Hay on 12, this new outing sidesteps Bert Jansch-ish fingerbusters for elegant mood pieces – the twinkly Moss Flower, ersatz reel Bog Cotton Jig and (for the old school) a harp-free caress of Turlough O'Carolan's Bridget Cruise 3rd Air. Hay's lament With The Morning Hills Behind You nods toward Jim O'Rourke folk art, while Gylfinir (Welsh for curlew) mixes playful and mournful with square-jawed panache. Do it again. Yes, with the cagoule on.

ALSO RELEASED

Lucy Farrell

★★★★

We Are Only Sound

HUDSON. DL

A sometime Eliza Carthy side-mouse and Furrow Collective member, Lucy Farrell has hidden her light under many bushels, but emerges as a grown-up Phoebe Bridgers on her folk-flavoured debut. Recorded using Nick Drake's own guitar and piano, the lost boy's unnaturally long fingers tug on the strings a little on But For You, but Farrell's shifting sands melodies and extra-high register are entirely her own. "I'm no good at this," she sings on the excellent Paperthin. Not so, not so.

O'Hooley & Tidow

★★★

Cloudheads

NO MASTERS. CD/DL

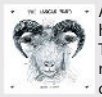
"We're on another planet together, two loners walking side by side," chorus Belinda O'Hooley and Heidi Tidow on the title track here, the Gentleman Jack-approved Yorkshire dyad's latest documenting a period when they were both diagnosed with autism, shortly after the arrival of their first child. Joy, exhaustion and Annie Lennox's Eurythmics-era piano colour Worn Out And Full Of Wonder, while poignancy peaks on Mathew And Ted (trigger warning: a dog dies). An oboe-heavy treat.

The Langan Band

★★★★

Plight O'Sheep

LANGAN BAND. CD/DL/LP



A good 10 years has passed since The Langan Band released their debut, *Bones Of Contention* (complete with nudie sleeve), but their Runrig-exiled-in-the-Balkans chops remain undiminished on album number two. Alpha-male Steeleye Spandex with oddball dub interludes, Leg Of Lamb turns a tale of a stolen dinner at a festival into elemental gothic drama, while The Bastard Hills Of Totterdown melds dog-on-a-rope Lankum swagger and Arctic Monkeys art-rock. Ram very much on.

Jon Wilks

★★★★

Before I Knew What Had Begun I Had Already Lost

GRIZZLY FOLK. CD/DL

Musician, journalist and podcaster, polymath Jon Wilks has specialised in Midlands songs of late but – prompted by a period of illness – explores more varied terrain on his new LP. Al Stewart's Bedsitter Images on an Ikea mattress, his Greek Street recalls young love in Soho, while handclaps amp up the DGDGCD-tuning delight on Gallons Of Brandy/Fox Tell, and Wilks goes full-bore Albion Band on Sam Larner banger Will Watch. Guest stars: Martin Simpson, Jackie Oates. Top stuff. *JW*

Bobby Lee: a modern Lomax descendant.

Have guitar, will travel

The mystical Yorkshireman finds himself inside vast influences. By Grayson Haver Currin.

Bobby Lee

★★★★

Endless Skyways

TOMPKINS SQUARE. DL/LP/MC

BOBBY LEE's riveting new album unfolds like a geographic guessing game – that is, exactly what part of the American South does the guitarist call home, at least right now? For 42 minutes, Lee seems to zig, zag, and zip across the faded blacktop byways of the United States' fabled musical Eden, stopping only when the jam looks ripe. Think of him as a modern Lomax descendant, showing up in tiny towns not to record the locals but instead to riff with them on the porch.

On the nervy handclap gambit Reds For A Blue Planet, for instance, Lee appears to crawl from the same Mississippi mud as Fred McDowell or the Dickinson boys who started the Allstars. But the impression never lasts long with this peripatetic: is he pursuing the new Nashville kosmische of William Tyler and friends during Impregnated By Drops Of Rainbow, or is he caked in the garage rock grit and soaked in the Beale Street booze of Memphis, half a state away, on The HR Manager's Beautiful Daughter? Is that Lee having a Shenandoah Valley garden party with Daniel Bachman and Pelt during acoustic miniature Let Us Now Praise Famous Grains, or is he tracing the ghost of John Fahey around the Mason-Dixon during Folsom Point Blues, a surprisingly lugubrious bit of New Age ascension?

Lee in fact comes from Sheffield, south Yorkshire, an ocean away from either Allman-inhabited swamps or mythological Mississippi hills. For the better part of a decade, he's been assimilating a mountain of disparate but devoted guitar heroes – Doc Watson to Manuel Göttsching, Grant Green to Tom Verlaine, Ali Farka Touré to Link Wray – into heady instrumental vignettes of imagined scenes and actual moods. At last, *Endless Skyways* makes it clear that the magic of Lee is not where he comes from, but where what he's found there will take him next. After years of sharp pastiche, *Endless Skyways* suggests the arrival of an erudite and electrifying ripper, doubling as a newly assured bandleader.

That is Slowdive's Ian McCutcheon galloping along during Reds For A Blue Planet, a treble-and-tremolo gem that spots a fertile patch of endless boogie somewhere between the desert and the Delta. There's a flinty edge to Lee's playing when he wants it, as he does here, but there's a suppleness at his command, too, as when he and pianist Guy Whittaker drift like an indica daydream through Thunder Travelling To Loftier Mountain Heights. In fact, this soft side is what makes *Endless Skyways* feel much more inviting than a genre workout or a groove exercise. Little pieces like Rainbow Reprise and Famous Grains offer up the comfortable passenger seat alongside Lee's crackling old amplifiers, and then he takes off – across the ocean, onto American shores and over its ancient mountains, and, during the best of *Endless Skyways*, skyward, as high as the heavens.

Gemma Rayner/Tompkins Square

Ben Folds

★★★★

What Matters Most

NEW WEST. CD/DL/LP

Versatile North Carolinian's first album in eight years.

Writing his US best-selling memoir; photography for National Geographic; a role in Amazon Prime drama The Wilds – Ben Folds has aced Renaissance man, but here he is, songwriting batteries fully recharged. There's a wealth of unobtrusive know-how nourishing these wry, poignant compositions, perfect set-ups (Paddleboat; Exhausting Lover) and treats like the Midnight Cowboy harmonica on Back To Anonymous around every bend. On heartbreaking Facebook friend reverie Kristine From The 7th Grade ("the anger, the all-caps") Folds' Emmy-nominated scores for TV likely inform the elegant strings, while Stevie Wonder-ish horns and a length of Hot Wheels track make unexpected appearances in Exhausting Lover. Deliberately sequenced like an old-school LP, *What Matters Most* is near faultless; a whole semester of song-craft in 40 minutes.

James McNair

Yes

★★★

Mirror To The Sky

INSIDEOUT MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Steve Howe, sole survivor of the classic line-up, produces the 23rd studio album.

Few bands labour under quite so much history as Yes, and in recent years the nostalgic demands of the faithful have ordained that guitarist Steve Howe and newer recruits trek the world reprising the hits of yesteryear. The good news is that on several lengthy tracks the current team, with Jon Davison a fine vocalist, create music here that's open, adventurous and embodies the spirit of Yes without sounding like a tribute act. The epic title song, All Connected or Cut From The Stars are a stirring step up from recent efforts, mixing Yes's 1970s cosmic adventurism with melodic mainstream rock. Sometimes, though, the group pull their punches – the church organ that Geoff Downes adds to Unknown Place never develops into the blowout Rick Wakeman would surely have unleashed, and on an over-generous two CDs the songs eventually dwindle into pleasant filler. About 60 per cent of a great Yes album.

John Bungey

Godflesh

★★★★

Purge

AVALANCHE. CD/DL/LP

Justin K Broadrick's post-industrial noise alias in punishing mood.

Last year diagnosed with autism and PTSD, Broadrick has been making 'feel-bad music' since the age of 11, initially on solo industrial cassettes, briefly with fellow Brummies Napalm Death circa 1987's *Scum*, then finally in Godflesh, where post-punk antecedents Swans, Big Black and Killing Joke collided in a malevolent beatbox-driven din. After an early-noughties nervous breakdown, JKB suspended activity, only to reconvene with bassist Ben Green in the mid-2010s, and this third reactivation outing revisits those initial influences to crushing effect. Nero launches off in churning fury, its max-intensity Jaz Coleman bark terrifying, scarcely human, while the unholy alliance of battering breakbeats and chugga-chugga crunch (Land Lord; Permission) brilliantly imagines The Prodigy with Killing Joke's Geordie Walker on guitar. It's not all bleak: within the lumbering inevitability that a drum machine brings, Broadrick pulls off a singular funkiness, which ensures that the titular 'purge' is fully transcendent, even enjoyable.

Andrew Perry

Jenny Lewis

★★★

Joy'All

BLUE NOTE/CAPITOL. CD/DL/LP

Ex-Rilo Kiley singer seeks happiness on fifth solo LP.

"My forties are kicking my ass/ And handing them to me in a margarita glass," sings Jenny Lewis on Puppy And A Truck, the title containing her antidote to mid-life and its malaises. Partly created during an online songwriting workshop hosted by Beck, *Joy'All* is stuffed with wry wisdom and glittering lines, a record that artfully curates life's highs and lows. While mentions of Tesla, hypoallergenic dogs and search histories nod to the present, these songs are filtered through a vintage haze, one Lewis lays out through the smoke-filled interior of Love Feel: "PCP and Mary Jane", "Waylon and Willie", Tennessee whiskey. At times, her fluency leaves you wishing for a smudge or run that hasn't been placed deliberately, but from the Tom Petty love-the-one-you're-with of Apples And Oranges to Cherry Baby's soft-focus disco, Lewis is a smart, fluent builder of her world.

Victoria Segal

RIVAL SONS
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OUT JUNE 2ND

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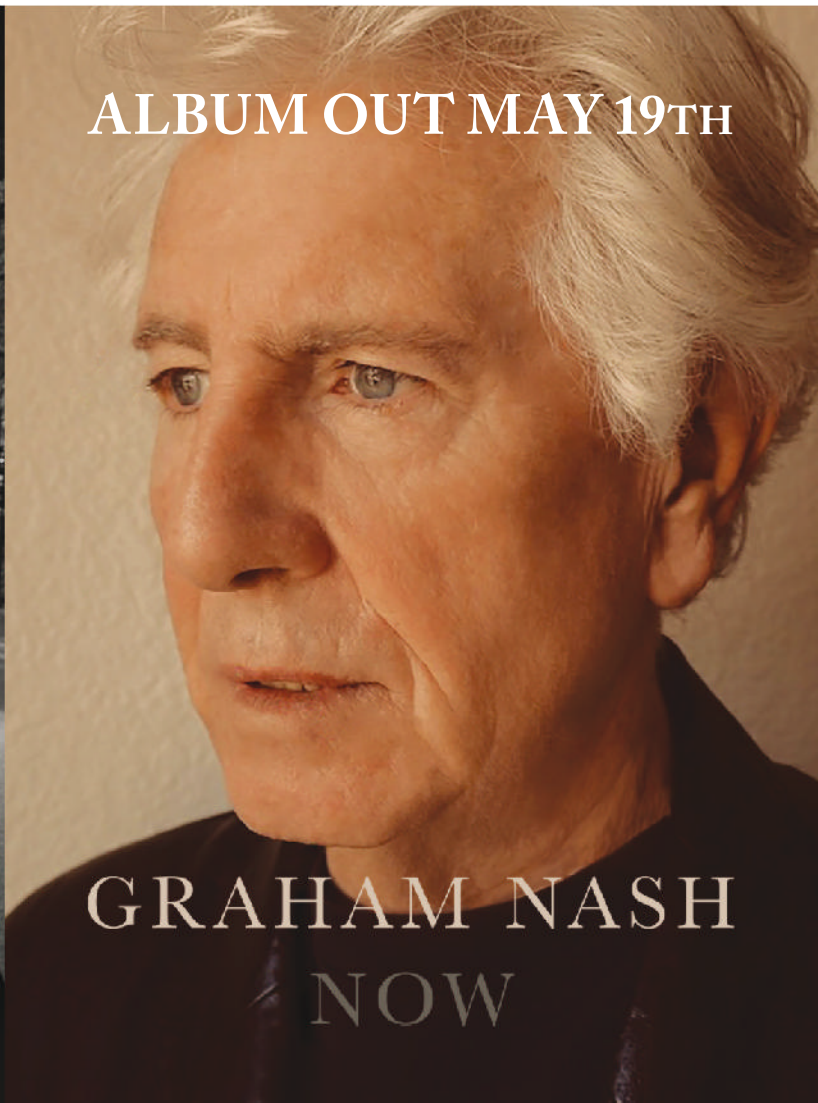

ALBUM OUT MAY 19TH
GRAHAM NASH
NOW

FILTER ALBUMS EXTRA

Blick Bassy
★★★
Mádibá
INFINÉ. CD/DL/LP
Last spotted with Disclosure, the Cameroonian's latest explores the rarity and vitality of water. Synthetic textures offset by tipsy trombones and buzzing bassoons, Bassy's turns range from tender (LoBa) to joyous (Touye) at the crossroads of electro, soul and folk. *AC*

BCUC
★★★★
Millions Of Us
ON THE CORNER. CD/DL/LP
Soweto's festival slayers are in fine voice on LP four. Driven by Mosebetsi Nzimande's bass riffs and pulse-racing percussion, Zithulele Nkosi's Afropsychedelic chant and Kgomotso Mokone's sweet counterpoint help its 20-minute title track distil all their choppy live magic. *AC*

Christian Cohle
★★★★
Wetlands
N-6. DL/LP
Dublin's answer to James Blake doubles down on his debut's 808s and heartbreaks on a cinematic suite of bruised confessionals that marry mesmeric synths with aching pianos on Wasted, squealing sax and alienation on the Blue Nile-ish Offline. Impressive. *AC*

Decisive Pink
★★★★
Ticket To Fame
FIRE. CD/DL/LP
Enigmatic modular synth-pop from Russian experimentalist Kate NV and former Dirty Projector Angel Deradoorian. Their pristine vocals often melt into harmonious counterpoint to the chill of space-age electronics, on this beguilingly, knowingly rendered debut. *JB*

Robert Ellis
★★★★
Yesterday's News
NILES CITY. CD/DL
After 2019's waggish *Texas Piano Man*, Ellis locates a tender spot on this wise, eloquent set, recorded live to tape; just his voice, willowy acoustic fingerpicking and smattering of percussion (faint bells add a suggestion of enchantment to Out Of The Woods). *JB*

Elkhorn
★★★★
On The Whole Universe In All Directions
CENTRIPETAL FORCE. CD/DL/LP
The NY duo normally gravitate around psych-backwoods guitar jams. But here Jesse Sheppard and Drew Gardner switch up for a languorous vibraphone/12-string jazz-folk masterclass akin to Tim Buckley's *Dream Letter London* instrumentalising. *JM*

Eyes Of Others
★★★★
Eyes Of Others
HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP
Edinburgh human jukebox John Bryden's debut spins through baggy psych-pop, dub distortion and retro-techno, fusing Weatherall or Sherwood moves with self-deprecating moods. Escalation hails its tribe to a Beta Band groove: "Sad people/my people/bad people". *JB*

Kaukolampi
★★★★
Inside The Sphere
OPTIMO MUSIC. CD/DL
Conceptually akin to Stephen King's Inside The Dome, K-X-P's Timo Kaukolampi's second solo LP is a twinkling array of detuned drones, sparse polyrhythms and cinematic ambience. Its heady mix of blurred techno and pitch-black prog is as intense as it is immersive. *AC*

Laura Loriga
★★★★
Vever
GOD UKNOWN. DL/LP
Layered organs, drones, harmoniums and skittering drums underpin the singular chamber pop-folk of this Bologna singer-songwriter. Loriga's uncanny textures shape dark ballads Door Ajar and Black Rose, akin to Sibylle Baier or Susanne Sundfør. *AC*

Novelty Island
★★★
Wallsend Weekend Television
9X9. CD/DL/LP
Liverpool singer/songwriter/producer Tom McConnell's second album, recorded in Abbey Road, is full of Beatlesy pop smarts; familiar but adeptly executed, and with woozy electronic effects aligning it to Temples et al. *LW*

EXTENDED PLAY

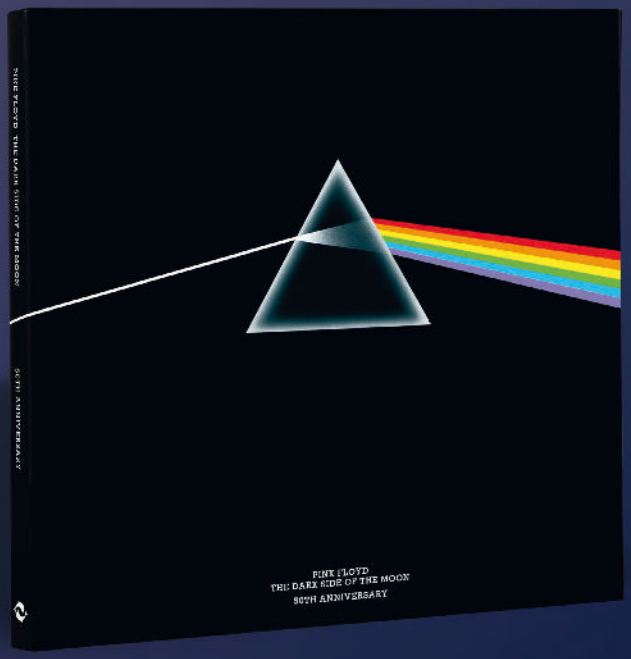
Roll up for the circus: (from left) Shane O'Mara, Lindy Morrison, Rob Snarski and Graham Lee.

SnarskiCircus-LindyBand
Someone Said That Someone Said
ROBSNARSKI.BANDCAMP. CD/DL
THIS AUSTRALIAN supergroup brings together Rob Snarski from The Blackeyed Susans, Go-Betweens drummer Lindy Morrison, Graham Lee from The Triffids on pedal steel, guitarist Shane O'Mara (of Paul Kelly's band) and bassist Dan Kelly (nephew of Paul). Their multiple pasts may or may not include a circus, but their debut EP certainly opens with a standing-on-horseback lyrical feat: Shane O'Mara Wore Mascara, a Velvets-ish story of Morrison's attempts to persuade the titular guitarist to wear make-up on-stage, citing Bolan and Ziggy as archetypes. Bowie also loved a self-reflexive lyric ("Hi Dave"– Can't Help Thinking About Me; "David, what shall I do?" – Teenage Wildlife) and here, the former Go-Between is rightly venerated as "Our golden queen" by "Her humble servants/Her worker bees/Lindy Band!" A class act that's tough to follow, but the single, Since I Slept With You, Everyone Wants To Sleep With Me is great too, engagingly withering, The Only Ones-style.

William Tyler & The Impossible Truth
★★★★
Secret Stratosphere
MERGE. CD/DL/LP
A great companion to the Bobby Lee album (*see page 90*), as Tyler and band (with Raconteur bassist Jack Lawrence) lean deeper into kosmische country rock. A cover of Kraftwerk's Radioactivity is audacious, but aptly judged. *JM*

Wolfmanhattan Project
★★★★
Summer Forever And Ever
IN THE RED. CD/DL/LP
"All we do is scream – give me ice cream!" roar this trash-garage supergroup on LP two. Mick Collins (Dirtbombs), Kid Congo Powers (Cramps) and Bob Bert (Pussy Galore) whip up a thrilling, sleazy rock'n'roll party. *AP*

FROM STUDIO TO STAGE, PRISM TO LENS



PINK FLOYD
THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

50TH ANNIVERSARY

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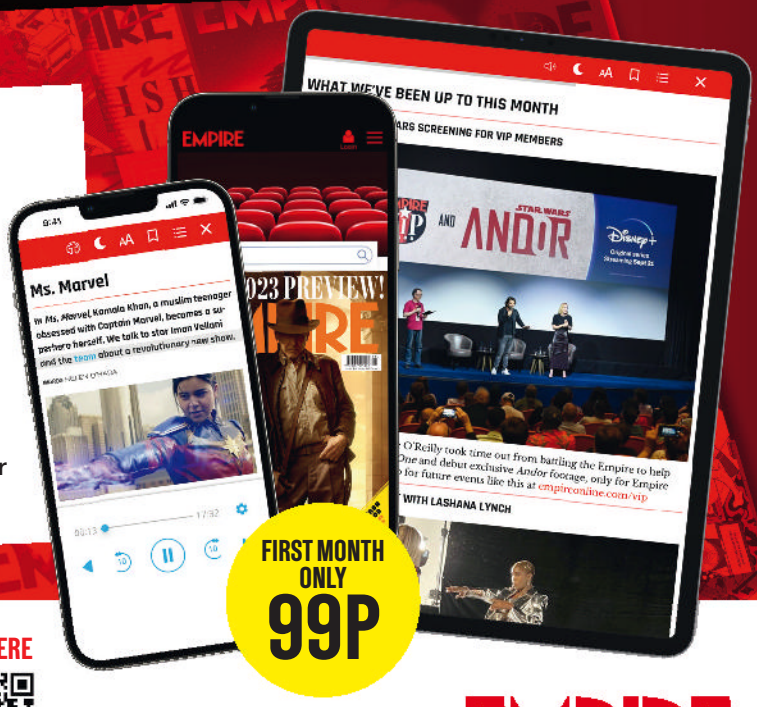

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EMPIRE

Walls come tumbling down

Joey Burns and John Convertino mark 20 years of blurring the boundaries. By Victoria Segal.

Calexico

★★★★

Feast Of Wire

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

THE TARAHUMARA, a group of indigenous people in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, are renowned for their prodigious ability to run long distances. It's a skill that gives them a remarkable power to hunt down birds and deer, exhausting their prey long before their own legs tired of the chase. Yet there are some things that they haven't been able to outpace – not least the opium trade that has crept across their land, the cartels using them to transport their goods, turning them into grimly literal drug runners.

Singer and multi-instrumentalist Joey Burns, one half of Calexico's core duo along with drummer John Convertino, was thinking of the Tarahumara when he was writing Quattro (World Drifts In), a track from 2003's *Feast Of Wire*. "World drifts in and world's a stranger," sings Burns over the relentless percussive push and heel-snapping brass, "From the day you're born/You'll always hit the ground running." The band's fourth album is powered by this urgent rush and scramble, whether it's driven by the need to escape something or to keep up with it. It's a record in constant human motion, full of people flung forward by forces they can't control, the places they inhabit hollowed out or flooded, their horizons shifting all the time.

"*Feast Of Wire* is a record in constant human motion."

BACK STORY: RATTLESNAKE SHAKE

- The album's title was inspired by A Feast Of Snakes by brutalist writer Harry Crews, his 1976 novel about the violent events surrounding a "Rattlesnake Round-up" in Mystic, Georgia. In a 2003 interview, Joey Burns stated that it connected to "this reptilian state of mind that one at times can feel… living in Tucson, Arizona or the Sonora desert" as well as the challenges and technologies of a changing world. "The wire could be anything – from a cellphone line to a guitar cable to a barbed wire."

Tom Sheehan

Burns and Convertino first came together in the early '90s as the rhythm section for Howe Gelb's quixotic desert beatniks Giant Sand, early adopters of the decade's alt-country ideas. They moved with Gelb from California to Tucson, Arizona, dabbling in filmic atmospherica by working with Bill Elm's lounge-jazz act Friends Of Dean Martinez. Calexico, formed in 1996, was something different, however, even the name – a Californian border town – suggesting a band dedicated to pushing at frontiers, blurring all kinds of state lines. They used Latin music not for cactus-shirted novelty, an exotic tequila trill, but a way of pushing at Americana's hard borders. If 1998's *The Black Light* and 2000's *Hot Rail* saw them break through, *Feast Of Wire* sharpened their vision, that lacerating, mouthful-of-ashes title signposting the territory they wanted to explore – those places where, as on Woven Birds, you can be "crushed by the promise of hope".

On the parched polka of Sunken Waltz, there's both a homeless man praying for a real rain to come and wash "whole Western states" away and "Carpenter Mike" who "dropped his tools and his keys and left", shucking off the comforts of the "gated neighbourhoods" to vanish into the wild, a sane response to an insane world. There's the subject of Not Even Stevie Nicks… who Thelma-and-Louises his car off a cliff and "into the blue", caught by the band in eternal freefall; on Across The Wire's "Alberto y Hermano", brothers struggling on a potentially life-changing journey north from Mexico, "dodging the shadows of the border patrol". Behind the crisp, sun-struck brass and button accordion there's nightmarish imagery: an eagle eating snakes, "a lake of sleeping children". Woven Birds, meanwhile, is a Tex-Mex Ghost Town, Burns showing what's left behind over tumbleweed rolls of percussion and zig-zag flashes of distortion: "The plaza in the village/Where mission bells used to ring/Is now a pile of stench and ruin."

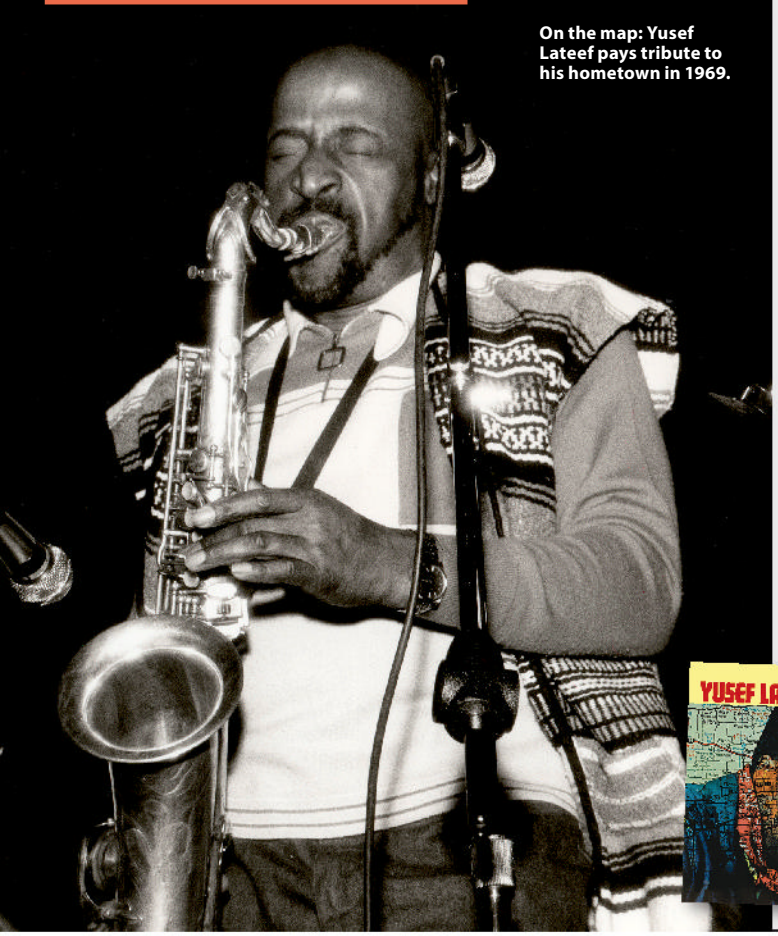
This restless surge is matched by the instrumentation: the brass and strings of Mariachi Luz De Luna (Jacob Valenzuela and Fernando Valencia); Paul Niehaus of Lambchop's pedal steel; accordion, synthesizers and Convertino's vigilant, reactive drums, sidewinding close to the scrubby edges of a song in some places, breaking cover in others.

It's no surprise that *Feast Of Wire*, with its themes of migration and dispossession, should feel like such a timely reissue in 2023. In 1998, Burns spoke of the migration build-up on the Tucson borders, about the "double-speak" of the "land of the free". "I think, the music finds its way of going through the barbed wire or past the helicopter's electric eye," he said. "The future looks bleak with no sign of change," sings Burns on Across The Wire, and while Trump-era wall-building and child-caging might have darkly exceeded the direst prognostications, it's a line that isn't so much prophetic as dismally pragmatic. There's a real currency to the ecological and economic storm clouds gathering around Sunken Waltz, or the tarry strings of Black Heart, a song in step with Barry Adamson's cinematic night visions, or Bristol trip-hop transposed to a different kind of South-west, a rattlesnake-wrestling Portishead, Tricky's Ponderosa in a pick-up truck.

Besides its imagery of a hostile environment – snake fangs, rusted metal, repressive barriers – Black Heart also shows a deep empathy: "One man's close pursuit/Is another man's last chance," sings Burns. It fits that *Feast Of Wire* should be a record rich in instrumentals, creating space to think, ensuring their storytelling isn't filling all the space from the top down. While Pepita's hand-stitched post-rock, Close Behind's unholstered Morricone menace or Stucco's glassy piano are dramatic, they're not manipulative, not so much concerned with ramping up the tension but reflecting it. There's also an awareness of the need for moments of joy and resistance: Güero Canelo for example, R.E.M.'s Underneath The Bunker with a diamond glint of street-level danger, or the spaghetti-electro of Attack El Robot! Attack!. A live show recorded in Stockholm in 2003 that is included here shakes off the dust, brings out a pop of pop, encourages a communal buzz, the songs tipping from dusty melancholy into defiant exuberance.

Around this time, Calexico would customarily end their performances with an encore of Love's Alone Again Or, included here in both live and studio versions. It's not hard to understand why they would be drawn to its mariachi brocades and gilts, but there's also that suggestion of universal communion beneath its lovelorn loneliness, the idea that, "I could be in love with almost everyone". *Feast Of Wire* understands how strange the world is, how cruel it can be, how exhausting it is to have to hit the ground running, over and over. Yet its openness, its refusal to limit and be limited, quietly guides this music towards a better place.

Border patrol: Calexico's Joey Burns (left) and John Convertino in the desert outside Tucson, Arizona, 2002.



On the map: Yusef Lateef pays tribute to his hometown in 1969.

Yusef Lateef

★★★★

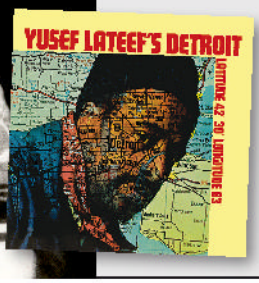
Yusef Lateef's Detroit: Latitude 42° 30' Longitude 83°

ARC. LP

Joyous 1969 jazz love song to the Motor City.

THE FIRST fruit of Gilles Peterson's new licence to roam through the Atlantic vaults is this neglected motherlode of psycho-geographical soul jazz. For his debut album on the label, Lateef and producer Joel Dorn assembled an all-star cast (including Bernard Purdie on drums, Cecil McBee on bass, Thad Jones on trumpet and Ray Barretto on congas) to play seven Lateef originals and one standard (That Lucky Old Sun) in tribute to the great multi-instrumentalist's hometown. From the orchestral hurly-burly of Bishop School through Lateef's hawker's cries at the end of Eastern Market ("Get your ripe corn") to the thrilling proto jazz-funk throw down of Belle Isle, the result is one musical guided tour where you won't need to open your fizzy drink too early in the journey.

Ben Thompson



The Moody Blues

★★★★

To Our Children's Children's Children

UMR. CD+ BR/DL/LP

Expanded and remixed box set of the band's first album for their Threshold label.

Early on, The Moody Blues looked like mail order catalogue models on acid – which they often were – but by 1969 they had become established as earnest cosmic balladeers. One of their best LPs, *TOCCC* has a reverb-y, spacey vibe. Inspired in part by the Apollo 11 moon landing, it lifts off with the instrumental headrush of Higher And Higher. The sound is rich and multi-layered, with mellotron and flute weaving Eastern lines on Sunset and adding poignancy to the haunting Candle Of Life. By contrast, the band sound focused and limber on these 1969 live sets, a BBC In Concert and a remixed Royal Albert Hall show. The latter features a punchy Gypsy, the complex Legend Of A Mind, a paean to their countercultural pal Timothy Leary, and concludes with the groovy pop belter Ride My See Saw.

Mike Barnes

Wishbone Ash

★★★★

Argus: 50th Anniversary Edition

MADFISH. CD/DL/LP/DVD

Twin-guitar pioneers' greatest hit re-booted and re-accessorised.

In 1972, Wishbone Ash's third album *Argus* became their first and last LP to breech the UK Top 5. Its highlights – Time Was, The King Will Come and Blowin' Free – were a perfect fusion of folk, blues and prog rock, and inspired Thin Lizzy, Iron Maiden and future generations of air guitarists. However embellished these songs are, they're still underpinned by sterling melodies and harmony vocals. This (technically 51st) anniversary edition is as spacious and richly detailed as Andy Powell and Ted Turner's numerous guitar solos. Extras include a remastered *Argus* by estranged Ash bass player Martin Turner, a yellow vinyl LP, demos, live discs from Memphis and London's Alexandra Palace, and a hardback book filled with rare photos and interviews. Even *Argus*'s cover model, the sentinel in the cape and Darth Vader helmet (real name: Bruce) gets to have his say.

Mark Blake

The Dream Syndicate

★★★★

History Kinda Pales When It And You Are Aligned: The Days Of Wine And Roses

FIRE AMERICA. CD/DL/LP

Fortieth anniversary 4-CD/2-LP version of Paisley Underground landmark, with 31 previously unreleased tracks.

Taking its awkward title from When You Smile's trippy lyrics, Steve Wynn & Co's 1982 debut, *The Days Of Wine And Roses*, was arguably the finest twin-guitar rocker since *Marquee Moon*. Quicksilver Messenger Service and Crazy Horse were two role models, but the album's dense, slashing energy is mainlined straight from The Velvet Underground, at odds with Paisley Underground vibrations. The extras (often gleaned from cassettes) are suitably ragged, all pistons firing and mad-for-it live jams, from their first rehearsal (bassist Kendra Smith fronts Too Little, Too Late and Last Chance For You in a Moe Tucker/VU third LP fashion; a path they didn't subsequently take) and the scratchier debut EP Down There, to radio and live sets. Glory days indeed. Lots of non-album songs too. Note: the vinyl and CD versions are US export only.

Martin Aston

Roxy Gordon

★★★★

Crazy Horse Never Died

PARADISE OF BACHELORS. CD/LP

Native American poet and activist's powerful spoken medicine.

"Things have been going OK here for 40 thousand years/Why didn't you try and learn American ways?" So goes Roxy Gordon's An Open Letter To Illegal Aliens from this 1988 album, reissued as an LP, CD and chapbook. A set of hardcore poems set to largely acoustic music, *Crazy Horse Never Died* variously posits the arrival of Europeans in North America as invasion, the introduction of unwanted 'diseases' (capitalism, materialism, communism, money, Christianity, Judaism) and illegal immigration. Gordon, a Texan of Choctaw and Assiniboine descent and close friend of both Leonard Cohen and Townes Van Zandt, was no great shakes as a musician, but the naïveté of the music – the John Carpenter-style electronica of Living Life As A Target is even pretty jarring – nicely sets up the sophistication of Gordon's words, turning the language of oppression back on his oppressor with eye-popping potency.

Andy Fyfe

Helene Smith

★★★

I Am Controlled By Your Love

NUMERO GROUP. LP

First Lady Of Miami Soul's mid-'60s recordings.

With songwriters Willie Clarke, Clarence Reid and Johnny Pearsall, the teenage Helene Smith created the original Miami soul sound, laying the groundwork for Clarke and Reid's later successes with Betty Wright at Alston and TK. Smith has previously been likened to Wright but, with a haunted quality to her voice and a crooning style filtered through gospel roots, she's closer to Mary Wells and Barbara Lewis. She made one album, 1967's *Sings Sweet Soul!*, a round-up of her singles to that point which remains un-reissued, although nine of the 12 tracks are collected on this vinyl best-of, its mix of heartbreak ballads and up-tempo R&B presenting a singer capable of expressing emotion and swinging carefree. With no breakthrough hit, Smith retired at 27 and became a teacher. Hearteningly, now in her seventies, she is performing again.

Lois Wilson

Bernard Purdie

★★★

Purdie Good!

CRAFT/JAZZ DISPENSARY. LP

Legendary tub-thumper's soulful funk fest.

A prolific session drummer renowned for his funky syncopations, 'Pretty' Purdie rose to fame in the 1960s and boasts a résumé that reads like a who's-who of jazz, rock, soul, and even pop. But as well as supplying a kinetic backbeat for everyone from James Brown to Steely Dan, Purdie found time to make his own records, which included this aptly titled 1971 soul-jazz platter. Mercifully, the all-instrumental LP isn't defined by interminable drum solos but instead highlights Purdie's exquisite sense of groove, as is the case with his superlative high-octane version of James Brown's Cold Sweat. There are also solid horn-led covers of hits by Bobby Bloom (Montego Bay) and Harry Nilsson (Everybody's Talkin') alongside four Purdie originals, the best of which is the bright and breezy You Turn Me On.

Charles Waring

Sackful of silver: Bob Dylan beckons us into his Shadow Kingdom.

Twilight zone

Dylan's other-worldly 2021 take on his back pages – yours, finally, to keep. By **John Mulvey**.

Bob Dylan

★★★★

Shadow Kingdom

COLUMBIA/LEGACY. CD/DL/LP

AS THE credits rolled at the end of Bob Dylan's Shadow Kingdom livestream on July 18, 2021, thanks were given to a venue called the Bon Bon Club in Marseille – a place, Dylanologists swiftly deduced, that had never existed. In 1962, however, a Bon Bon "supper club" in Philadelphia was the subject of a court case with Pat Lynn Hackett, a folk singer, accusing the owners of racketeering. Hackett's right leg had to be amputated after Eddie Nace, the Bon Bon Club operator, pushed her down the staircase. Her error, according to the New York Daily News, was being "sympathetic about a customer who had been relieved of $700 by a B-girl".

A real-life noir thriller from the dawn of Dylan's career. A location shrouded in enigma and subterfuge (a Santa Monica soundstage being somewhat less romantic). A livestream designed to be ephemeral, to disappear like the smoke from all those cigarettes after a couple of days. And what the subtitle described as 'The Early Songs Of Bob Dylan', reconfigured without drums to complement the liminal atmosphere of director Alma Har'el's visuals. The Shadow Kingdom, it seemed, was not built to last.

The thing is, of course, that Bob Dylan songs aren't quite so transient. At the end of The Philosophy Of Modern Song, Dylan writes, "Music transcends time by living within it, just as reincarnation allows us to transcend life by living it again and again." This, perhaps, is the key to Shadow Kingdom, and a decent artistic reason – the commercial expediencies being self-evident – why Dylan has chosen to release the show as an album now. The old songs and vintage effect might invoke a certain nostalgia, but the juke joint ambience is more Lynchian than neat historic reconstruction, and the songs sound little like they used to do. It's a dream Dylan destination, but it's one which is, as per his Philosophy, "of a time but also timeless".

Shadow Kingdom the album, then, turns out to be an extremely useful addition to the Dylan catalogue, and very much of a piece with his current manoeuvres. Think of it as a companion to *Rough And Rowdy Ways*, and that album's ongoing tour: as if Dylan were reinventing those 'Early Songs' in the same silvery light, and getting them out of the way before he hits the road again to concentrate on his Latest Songs.

Four selections turn up on both *Shadow Kingdom* and in recent live setlists – When I Paint My Masterpiece, Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I'll Go Mine), I'll Be Your Baby Tonight and To Be Alone With You. And while the roadhouse rhythm of the touring band is replaced by more of a stealthy cantina sway – lots of accordion and acoustic guitars, no piano or fiddle – there's a clear affinity. Songs hang in the air, implying rather than asserting uncanny dimensions. Dylan's voice, again, is quite beautiful, with a control and nuance so many thought he'd lost.

It's particularly impressive on What Was It You Wanted, a cut from 1989's *Oh Mercy* that doesn't seem especially 'Early' until you realise it was recorded 27 years into Dylan's career, and that 34 years have subsequently elapsed. Dylan has long treated his songs as standards, so compositionally robust as to be infinitely malleable, but the gravitas here is striking; as if the removal of the beats has removed the song from linear time. Tombstone Blues, slowed to a spectral recitation, sounds like it was written the same day as Murder Most Foul, but a day that's hard to place in either 2020 or 1965. Pledging My Time is the most ethereal of blues, a rendering of tradition that seems to be broadcast from the spirit plane. So weird; so lovely.

Further mysteries accrue. Musicians were listed at the end of the livestream – among them Shahzad Ismaily on accordion, and Big Thief's Buck Meek, though none of Dylan's road band – but aren't mentioned in the album credits. The music that played under the film's closing titles is here, a desert sunset instrumental called Sierra's Theme that would've fitted neatly onto the *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid* soundtrack. Accordion, again, is key.

"You want to be piggy backed into another dimension where your body and mind can be restored," Dylan writes of Jimmy Wage's Take Me From This Garden Of Evil in The Philosophy Of Modern Song, and that's what *Shadow Kingdom* does, if not with quite the same rockabilly vigour. Its brief 2021 run remains a puzzle, but no longer an illusion: The Bon Bon Club is open for business again, whenever we need it.

Getting high: Evan Dando climbs to his poppermost peak, September 1993.

The Lemonheads

★★★★

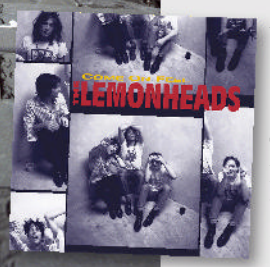
Come On Feel The Lemonheads

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

Tipping-point album from grunge-pop heartbreakers hits 30.

"DON'T WANNA get high/But I don't wanna not get high," sings Evan Dando on the thrashy frustration of Style, one indication why *Come On Feel The Lemonheads* saw his band running onto all kinds of dangerous rocks. There was also the whimsy (see Being Around), an over-reliance on blousy country (decent gesture Big Gay Heart excepted) and – damning in 1993 – the fact it just wasn't predecessor *It's A Shame About Ray*. Yet this reissue – completed by two discs of acoustic versions and "curiosities", including a lovely Miss Otis Regrets – brightly flags up their sixth album's abundant strengths. It's About Time, silvered by former bassist (and song subject) Juliana Hatfield, plays both butterfly and bee, while Favorite T and Into Your Arms are pipette-precise titrations of melancholy and euphoria. Tangle with the what-could-have-beens if you want, but there are reasons to be grateful for this record as it is.

Victoria Segal



Nucleus

We'll Talk About It Later

★★★★★

Snakehips Etcetera

★★★★

BE WITH. LP

Two more heavyweight slabs of reissued vinyl joy from Ian Carr's endlessly mutating fusion supergroup.

Is there a more deliriously propulsive album opener in jazz or rock, never mind jazz-rock history, than *We'll Talk About It Later*'s stunning seven-minute curtain-raiser Song For The Bearded Lady? The rest of Nucleus's 1971 second album somehow sails over this stratospherically high bar with Chris Spedding's smouldering contribution to the ominously unfurling title track, arguably his finest recorded moment (certainly finer than his vocal on Ballad Of Joe Pimp). Four years on and slimmed down to a road-hardened sextet (including two Rogers – Sutton and Sellers – on bass and drums) the lubriciously jacketed *Snakehips Etcetera* finds the ensemble on no less spectacular form, with the title track's irresistible Procol-Harum-produced-by-David-Axelrod vibe and the exuberantly reflective Afro-tinged closer Heyday particular highlights.

Ben Thompson

Mike Galinsky

Barbara Stant

★★★★

My Mind Holds Onto Yesterday

NUMERO. LP

Beat ballads, protest soul and deep funk from the singer known as 'The Queen Of The Norfolk Sound'.

Petersburg, Virginia singer Barbara Stant started out in her neighbourhood church before joining Noah Biggs's Norfolk, Virginia Shiptown stable in 1970. Aged 23, she sung first as a part of the label's girl group, The Idets, then upon going solo, quickly became the label's queen, her six singles spanning 1971 to '77 a showreel for her raw vocal might and pure expression. Cherry-picked here, highpoints include covers of Sam Dees' Unsatisfied Woman and, bravely, Aretha's Baby I Love You. In Stant's hands, the first mixes emotional agony with passion and grit to become a deep soul classic; the second is delivered as in church, Stant, the righteous preacher, her animated exhortations matched to spontaneous organ vamps and scratchy guitar licks. The original title track, meanwhile, captures the frenzy and kinesis of the dancefloor.

Lois Wilson

Mull Historical Society

★★★★

Archeology: Complete Recordings 2000-2004

DEMON. CD/LP

First three albums and rarities by "twelfth greatest ever Scottish band".

On his first three albums in the noughties, Colin MacIntyre – nom-de-plume Mull Historical Society – gradually progressed from a DIY bedroom Brian Wilson to, well, a fully baroque studio Brian Wilson, and yet he bafflingly remained a cult artist. These double-disc vinyl reissues of those first albums – 2001 debut *Loss*, 2003's *Us* and, for the first time ever on vinyl, *This Is Hope* from 2004 – still sound unique and timeless, while the lavish CD book/box set includes a fourth disc of live, demo and unreleased rarities, including supremely odd covers of The Strokes' Last Nite, Ms Dynamite's It Takes More, and Radiohead's Motion Picture Soundtrack. Quite wondrously, MacIntyre's keen pop hooks, accompanied by his quirky, sometimes absurd observations, sound more in step with modern times than they did when they originally appeared in this century's first decade.

Andy Fyfe

Various

★★★★

Gary Crowley's Punk & New Wave Vol. 2

EDSEL. CD/DL/LP

Another 77 deep-ish cuts from punk's UK pop-radio turntablist.

As was thrillingly proved by 2017's first instalment from the one-time Capital Radio DJ, there's plenty of mileage left in anthologising vintage late-'70s new wave nuggets – loads of fun, too. The remit for Crowley (alongside co-trainspotter Jim Lahat) extends to choice album tracks and B-sides by big-hitters like The Clash (Disc 1 opens with their frowned-upon 1-2 Crush On You – it's OK, actually!), and from medium-rankers like The Members, whose bangers have obviously been comped myriad times before. With that relative freshness established, there are a handful of unknowns per disc of 18-20: The Limit's sneery My World At Night, Liquid Stone's no-fi ramalama outbreak Here Comes The Weekend and Nervebreakers' hilariously dumb My Girlfriend Is A Rock (rhymes with "she looks like a piece of chalk") will definitely raise an eyebrow at any lager-fuelled get-together of knowledgeable parties. Limitless kicks to be had here.

Andrew Perry

The South Side Movement

★★★★

South Side Movement

REAL GONE MUSIC. LP

1973 funk originally issued on Sceptre imprint Wand.

They started out as the backing band for funk duo Simtec & Wylie, who hit with 1971's Gotta Get Over The Hump, then in 1973 the Chicago octet recorded this self-titled first, and best, of three albums. Its economical, in-the-room-with production by James Vanleer – he also writes or co-writes nine of the 10 songs – captures the thrilling propulsive bass, guitar, drums core, then on top come jabbing horns, kinetic organ and vocals by leader Melvin Moore that are throaty and thick. It's thrilling stuff throughout, with peaks I' Been Watching You, an irrepressible US R&B Top 20 hit since sampled by the Beastie Boys, Beck, Erykah Badu et al, and Can You Get To That – not the Funkadelic song of the same name, but summoning a similar transportive feeling nonetheless.

Lois Wilson

Michael Nesmith

★★★★

Pretty Much Your Standard Ranch Stash – 50th Anniversary Edition

7A. CD/LP

More musical evolution from Monkee Mike in 1973.

Nez's sixth solo album once again proved that had there never been The Monkees, he still would've produced sublime music. (The argument can be made that he may have been taken more seriously without them.) The native Texan blended the drawling, shit-kicking authenticity of honky tonk and eccentric inventiveness of Dylan-esque folk rock, producing classics of proto-progressive country we know now as Americana. He let his roots show in country & western covers like Billy Hill's Prairie Lullaby and Cindy Walker's Born To Love You, as well as bluegrass daddy Bill Monroe's Uncle Pen. He was also an ace writer of hooks as heard in originals like Winonah, Continuing and especially Some Of Shelly's Blues – one of his flat-out classics that's been countlessly recovered by others. Also, salute to killer pedal steel guitarist Red Rhodes.

Michael Simmons

It goes like this...

Carefully curated trawl of lesser-spotted cuts from the first wave of hip-hop 45s. By **Andy Cowan**.

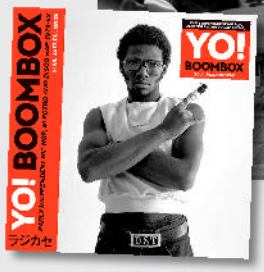
Boom! Shake the room: *Yo!* goes back to the old school with a selection of portraits by Sophie Bramly.

Various

★★★★

Yo! Boombox: Early Independent Hip Hop, Electro And Disco Rap 1979-83

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP



THE HIP-HOP floodgates truly opened after Rapper's Delight. The untamed rhyming bliss of Sugarhill Gang's 15-minute anthem democratised a genre already over half a decade old, but with no cultural imprint beyond the South Bronx block parties that spawned it. As a string of indie labels sprung up in Harlem, the majors were the only conspicuous party poopers, dismissing hip-hop as the next fly-by-night black craze. As wrong as they were, their disinterest provided a fertile proving ground.

Just as Sugarhill's Sylvia Robinson employed musicians to replay a break from Chic's Good Times to let her MCs loose, the surge of good-times jams that followed fast in its wake invariably built upon a popular disco break (see Just Four's infectious recreation of Tom Tom Club's Genius Of Love or Chapter III's crowd-moving flip of Cheryl Lynn's To Be Real). Yet while Soul Jazz's trio of previous *Boombox* compilations centred squarely on New York, *Yo!* casts it net further afield, dredging rare early rap treasure from unlikely quarters.

To the command of "Okay Mr. Harris, hit it!", the tag-team raps of Chicago's Carver Area High School's Get Live '83 bristle with fun and enthusiasm, kicking unlikely props to their schoolteachers. The P-funk horns accompanying city mate Eye Beta Rock's old-school dramatics or the engaging baritone of Tri-state rapper Mike T's slap-bass fest are similarly enlivening, while Californian Magic Trick's rare private press is a pure slice of early hip-hop B-side gold (unlike its A-Side's misfiring homage to US marines).

Products of a time when the DJs held sway over MCs, these almost exclusively party-oriented entreaties flow with little reason but plenty of rhyme (see Sinister 2's bizarre claim to "make all the fly guys start to fart"), their sheer brio compensating for a relative lack of sophistication. While a couple of bandwagon jumpers make up the numbers here – Sangria's cheesy synth jam, Silver Star's fanciful nursery rhymes – they help illuminate the wider context.

Tellingly, the strongest cuts come from two Bronx originators. Funky Four Plus One More's Rappin' And Rocking The House ranks among the smoothest early rap singles, lit up by female MC Sha-Rock's cool control. Elsewhere, the superlative interplay of Kidd Creole, Raheem, Cowboy, Melle Mel and Mr Ness on Super Rappin' No. 2 makes up for Grandmaster Flash not appearing on his own single – the true original's scratching/mixing innovations eventually surfacing on 1981's The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel. Add Sophie Bramly's (from her excellent Soul Jazz book) intimate photographic portraits and this good-time treasure trove becomes essential.

Various

★★★

Joe Gibbs Presents Dancehall Stylee

DR BIRD. CD

Double CD set of early Jamaican dancehall EPs.

In the late '70s/early '80s, reggae underwent significant transformation as a new set of singers and rapping deejays active on the west Kingston soundsystems implemented the dancehall style, tackling themes of romance, carnal activity, and occasionally more weighty matters, their output voiced on rugged rhythms often re-working rocksteady classics for contemporary audiences. Although in the shadow of Channel One studio as dancehall came to prominence, this 2-CD set shows that executive producer Joe Gibbs and co-producer/engineer Errol Thompson ably adapted to the new form: Cornell Campbell's Boxing Around, Al Campbell's No Children Don't Cry, Chalice's Good To Be There, Barrington Levy's My Woman and Junior Murvin's Time Stiff are among the highlights here, with bawdy ballads from Lui Lepke, Madoo, Kojak & Liza and Lee Van Cleef also notable; vinyl surface noise is audible in places.

David Katz

Rhythm Makers

★★★★

Soul On Your Side

BE WITH. LP

Bronx outfit's sole LP, from 1976; originally issued on the Vigor Records imprint.

An artistic chameleon adept at reinventing himself to ride the musical trends, bassist-vocalist Keith 'Sabu' Crier performed '60s R&B as Sabu & The Survivors, late-'70s disco as GQ and, in between, masterful funk at the helm of Rhythm Makers. Their lone LP from 1976 also includes some soul (the silk'n'grit of Street Dreamin'; the falsetto swooning ballad You're My Last Girl), but it's the innovative dancefloor cuts that have elevated original copies of the album to holy grail status: the dynamite instrumental Monterey with its squelchy synths, snaking bass and much sampled drum break; Zone, an intergalactic jazz-funk with global rhythms; and Can You Feel It (Part 1), with its *Thembi*-styled sax, that was big at legendary clubs the Loft, Garage and latterly Caister Weekenders.

Lois Wilson

Geraint Watkins

★★★★

Aide-Mémoire

LAST MUSIC COMPANY. CD

Balham Alligator and sideman to the giants compiled.

Since the mid-'70s, Geraint Watkins played alongside assorted A-listers (Van Morrison, Paul McCartney, Mark Knopfler). But, there was more. And as these 41 tracks showcase, he led the zydeco-crazed Balham Alligators and released half a dozen solid solo LPs. 1979's Deep In The Heart Of Texas oozed craft as well as authenticity, the brooding Heaven Only Knows shows he was still on his game five decades later, and whipsmart, innovative takes on Heroes & Villains and even Johnny B Goode add another dimension. The selections from 2019's *Rush Of Blood*, a songwriting and production union with Basement Jaxx's Simon Ratcliffe, are a revelation. Showing that sometimes sidemen can lead, Ratcliffe ceded musical domination to Watkins, but the young pup brought a complementary 21st-century uplift to the spaghetti-tinged Rush Of Blood itself and the string-laden ballad Another Day Over (Reprise).

John Aizlewood

Killing Joke

★★★

In Dub: Rewind (Vol. 2)

CADIZ. CD/DL/LP

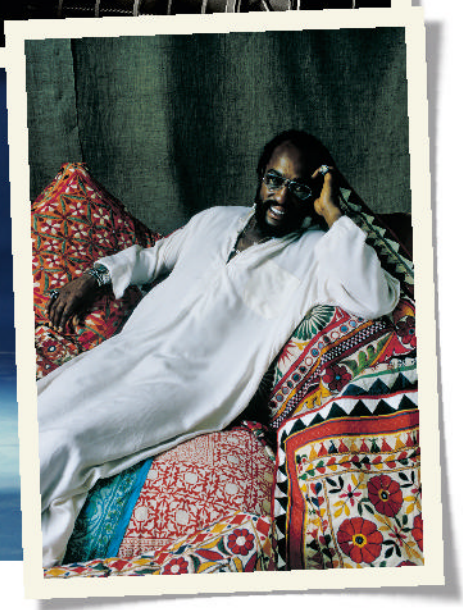
Post-punk kings re-imagined by bassist Youth.

The best dub records, as any reggae fan knows, arise from top-drawer raw materials, which makes Jaz Coleman's apocalyptic hit squad prime candidates for a mixing-desk makeover. Much like 2014's 3-CD initial volume of *In Dub*, the parameters of 'dub' derive here from the mind of trance-master Youth, who spent much of the late '80s and '90s churning out house/techno remixes influenced by the realignment principles of King Tubby et al. So while there's an echo-heavy, rootsical stab at 2015's Panopticon, and 1980's Change is tilted into a more cavernous funk-skank, these sit alongside the debut LP's Bloodsport souped up into a full-throttle acid-house throbfest, while the second of two versions on early classic Pssyche closes the set with a 5am-at-Megatripolis deep-space shuffle. Branding *In Dub: Rewind* as a 'dance remix album' might've rendered it unmarketable in 2023, but it's all great stuff, with marks added for the single-CD brevity this time.

Andrew Perry

Sophie Bramly

Philly love songs: PIR mainstays (clockwise from left) Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes, Kenny Gamble and Billy Paul.



FILE UNDER...

Green Machine

Black and white united in their enthusiasm for the olive/magenta label from Philly. By Jim Irvin.

TO MAKE headway in the predominantly white music business of Philadelphia – having been effectively excluded from outlets like the Cameo-Parkway label (home of The Twist and other dance-craze smashes) – Kenny Gamble & Leon Huff had to create their own business, setting up labels Neptune and Gamble, finding studio Sigma Sound and its brilliant engineer Joe Tarsia, and hiring a team of gifted arrangers, Thom Bell, Bobby Martin, Lenny Pakula, plus musicians who could cut hits with efficient regularity. It took years to perfect – they'd struggled partly because they weren't natural businessmen, simply wanting to write and record music – but suddenly fell into place when, in 1968, they mined gold on Gamble with the sixth single by their first signings, The Intruders' Cowboys To Girls, going Number 1 R&B and Number 6 Pop on Billboard's charts.

That swung the industry's spotlight their way. Atlantic hired Gamble & Huff to produce Archie Bell and Dusty Springfield, and Columbia/CBS, anxious to get into the crossover R&B market, brought them Laura Nyro and, eventually, in 1971, offered to bankroll Philadelphia International Records, with an emphasis on creating cohesive (and lucrative) albums and putting the might of Columbia's distribution network behind them.

Since the label's 50th anniversary, Snapper have been releasing a series of desirable box sets under the catch-all *The Sound Of Philadelphia*, each containing remastered CDs of eight of the first 24 PIR albums, in chronological order, plus a 12-inch vinyl single related to each set, and a large format book containing the full sleeve art and notes on all the albums.

They're now up to Volume 3, *Love Is The Message* ★★★ (PIR), taking us into 1975. The downside of this self-compiling remit is that these eight LPs coincide with a comparatively hit-free run and include a couple of complete outliers: Monk Montgomery's *Reality*, in which Wes's bass-playing brother takes centre stage, one for fans of bass solos over luscious strings and brass, while Thad Jones & Mel Lewis's *Potpourri* is a fairly workaday big-band jazz LP.

The Ebonys' self-titled album is very cool, though. The beautiful It's Forever, also a single, is a fine example of the Philly recipe. It's achingly slow with an explosive orchestral arrangement and dense harmonies sounding like they've been recorded in church. If Motown tracks felt like a house party, PIR's records might span an entire street in an upscale neighbourhood, painting pictures of opulence and aspiration.

Behind all that lay house orchestra MFSB (standing for Mother Father Sister Brother or Motherfucking Son-of-a Bitch, depending on who you asked), whose second LP of smoothly grooving instrumentals *Love Is The Message* (*TSOP* in the UK) is a stand-out in this selection. The O Jays' *Survival*, though an R&B chart-topper, hasn't endured like their brilliant preceding LPs *Ship Ahoy* and *Back Stabbers*, skewing a little dry and worthy. Likewise, Harold Melvin & The Bluenotes' *To Be True* is full of plush, comparatively hookless material, though single Bad Luck still tickles the feet. Perhaps the intense work rate – many PIR acts cut two LPs a year – was starting to impact on quality. But on *Got My Head On Straight*, Billy Paul's July, July, July, July demonstrates how a slight song can be turned into something remarkable by the label's luxury brand of arrangement.

The eccentric Bunny Sigler – who drove a pink Cadillac with customised rabbit-shaped windows – was a PIR staffer who cut some forgotten but intriguing records. His *That's How Long I'll Be Loving You* (AKA *Keep Smiling*) provides an unexpected highlight, crackling with his personality on the daft Shake Your Booty and a ridiculously slow cover of Love Train.

Clearly not everything PIR issued has aged gracefully, but these exquisitely presented sets provide the perfect way to discover, enjoy and archive its rewarding output.

"Monk Montgomery's *Reality* is one for fans of bass solos over luscious strings and brass."

Sony BMG Music Entertainment (3)

Revenge is sweet: the film poster for the Meiko Kaji-starring Lady Snowblood.

Meiko Kaji

★★★★

Hajiki Uta

WE WANT SOUNDS. DL/LP

First-ever reissue of the 1973 LP from the Japanese actress and star of Female Prisoner Scorpion and Lady Snowblood.

IF WESTERN ears are already familiar with the exquisitely melancholy vocals of Meiko Kaji it's doubtless from hearing her desolate outsider ballads Shura No Hana ('Flower Of Carnage') and Urami Bushi ('My Grudge Blues') in Quentin Tarantino's 2003 homage to Japanese cinema, Kill Bill. Both songs originally featured in early-'70s exploitation thrillers Lady Snowblood and Female Prisoner #701: Scorpion, star vehicles for Kaji in which she played the perennial role of unsmiling female revenger. Those films often came with vocal interludes and theme songs that added fuzztone guitar, sweeping strings, parping spaghetti western horns and supper-club sax to Kaji's forlorn yet defiant vocals. If the idea of Ennio Morricone scoring Marty Robbins' *Gunfighter Ballads* for a Japanese Petula Clark appeals to your crack-pot tastes, then this record demands to be in your collection.

Andrew Male

Mike Oldfield

★★★★★

Tubular Bells: 50th Anniversary Edition

UNIVERSAL. CD/LP/BR

Remastered CD and LP, with Dolby Atmos and Quad mixes on Blu-ray

This reissue includes the arrangement of Tubular Bells from the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, the intro to the abandoned Tubular Bells 4 – probably Oldfield's last composition – Tubular X, an arrangement of the opening section woven into The X-Files theme, and the obligatory remixes. But with all the reworkings and variations it's the original that endures. Back in the day, some writers resisted being impressed by Oldfield the boy wonder, approaching *Tubular Bells* as a multi-overdubbed novelty. The composer says it was the product of an "angst-ridden teenager", but he poured everything into the music. It wasn't a furrow-browed 'symphonic' work, but a series of inspired melodic episodes sequenced in a way that worked beautifully and still sounds remarkably fresh today. And as *Tubular Bells* has given more people more pleasure than almost any other album, it only seems fair to give it full marks.

Mike Barnes

Codeine

★★★★

The White Birch

NUMERO. CD/DL/LP/MC

New York slowcore pioneers' intense, majestic final LP.

The second album by Codeine was, if anything, slower, louder and starker than their debut, 1990's *Frigid Stars* LP. Perfecting that album's unhurried, minimalist aesthetic, the songs of *The White Birch* gathered weight and intensity from the space between their notes, the contrast between Stephen Immerwahr's soft, understated vocals and the music's bare but bold crescendos. The opening track Sea set the tone, an elemental crawl, its tolling notes slow building towards critical mass; heavy, but not metal. Elsewhere, the slug-slow inching of Washed Up underscored the song's meditative, introspective nature, while Wird, one of two tracks featuring Squirrel Bait's David Grubbs on extra guitar, is eminently Slint-esque, all pointed corners, brittle tension and brooding mystery. That Codeine called it a day shortly afterwards is, three decades on, unsurprising – they must have realised they'd pursued this unmistakable sound to its conclusion.

Stevie Chick

Various

★★★

Silberland Vol 2: The Driving Side Of Kosmische Musik 1974-1984

BUREAU B. CD/DL/LP

A second psychedelic exploration of lesser-travelled Germany.

Wolfgang Riechmann's 1978 cut Silberland resembles a slow panoramic shot across a frozen landscape, but here, his song title has been appropriated for more dynamic forms of kosmische and motorik sound. The founders of Kluster – Conrad Schnitzler, Moebius and Roedelius – are all amongst *Silberland*'s more recognisable drivers; likewise, Thomas (brother of Klaus) Dinger, whose Für Dich radiates a sunny buzz next to Asmus Tietchens' nocturnal beauty Bockwurst À La Maîtresse. Faust's Juggernaut, however, has the right kind of song title but its discordant guitar and drum shuffle resemble a metaphorical pitstop more than a motorik ride to the future. Instead, let Harald Grosskopf's streamlined electro-glide Eve On The Hill, You's Moog riot Son Of A True Star, and Günter Schickert's relentless Puls guide you home – or keep you on the road if you wish.

Martin Aston

Daft Punk

★★★★

Random Access Memories: 10th Anniversary Edition

COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP

French duo's commercial behemoth (and swansong) reissued with 35 minutes of demos and outtakes.

If Daft Punk's titanic hit Get Lucky defined their fourth and final album, this expanded reissue is a reminder of both its brilliance and oddness. While the likes of Lose Yourself To Dance and Give Life Back To Music tapped the same disco vein, *Random Access Memories* also featured Julian Casablancas through a vocoder (Instant Crush), Carpenters co-writer Paul Williams going all musical theatre on Touch, and the sheer prog intensity of closer Contact. Of the extras, The Writing Of Fragments Of Time features work-in-progress dialogue between Thomas Bangalter and singer Todd Edwards, Horizon is an acoustic guitar slowie that ventures into Air territory, and the demo of Get Lucky reveals its jazz-funk origins. Cream of the crop is Casablancas's return on Infinity Repeating, which sounds like a spangly outtake from Michael Jackson's *Off The Wall*.

Tom Doyle

The Teardrop Explodes

★★★★

Culture Bunker 1978-82

UMR/EMI. CD/DL/LP

Dozens of unheard demos and live cuts from Julian Cope's personal vaults in a 6-CD/7-LP box.

For 2010's *Kilimanjaro* deluxe edition, Cope refused to play ball, ridiculing The Cure's exhaustive demo-laden reissues as like obsessing over your own bowel movements. Forty-one years since the Teardrops' implosion, the Archdrude has relented, here collating every single-plus-B-sides, but more strikingly unveiling four CDs' worth of live recordings, outtakes, obscurities and legendary discarded songs: these include the jaunty *Kilimanjaro*-era Beauty Come Second, synth-anchored tracks like Vox Clemantis In Deserto, even an "Aretha Franklin-approved" cover of Save Me. Most enjoyably, Disc 5 documents the winter 1981 line-up's four-week Club Zoo residency in Liverpool, where the opening night's sinewy Treason tellingly contrasts with the last's whacked-out improvisations on Culture Bunker and Sleeping Gas. As Cope's mental health crumbled, a third LP only appeared subsequently, in funked-up form: Disc 6's Cope-Balfe demos on synth and drum machine intriguingly reveal where the band might've headed instead, in places evoking Can, Cluster and Low, in others presaging Aphex Twin's ambient work.

Andrew Perry

Roslyn & Charles

★★★★

Everything Must Change

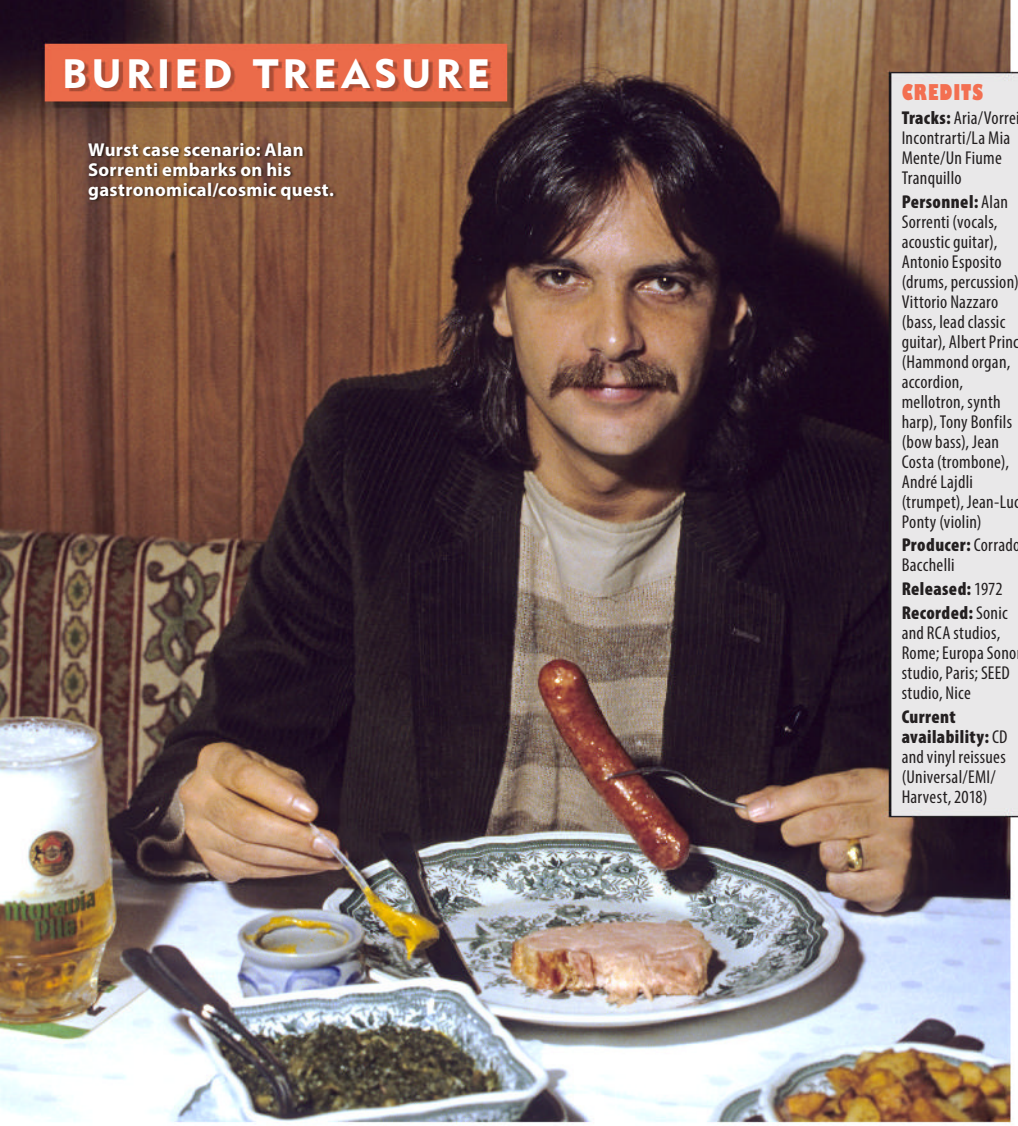
REAL GONE MUSIC. DL/LP

Ace first-time vinyl reissue of rare gospel disco from '81.

Roslyn Johnson and Charles McCloud made gospel for the disco age. They recorded just two albums, and this first, recorded in 1981 for the obscure Cheri label, is full of diva vocal might, forceful bass and pounding piano chords. Come Go With Me could even be defined as proto house, such is its relentless beat. Little is known about the pair, although Johnson also performed in The Stars Of Faith ensemble, most notably at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1983. But the strength of these performances suggests that had their sights been turned towards the secular arena they would have made it; *Everything Must Change*'s mix of originals and covers of Amazing Grace and Donny Hathaway's Someday We'll All Be Free evokes both the euphoria of worship and the utopian promise of the dancefloor.

Lois Wilson

Meiko Kaji Lady Snowblood poster © Toho co. Ltd.



Wurst case scenario: Alan Sorrenti embarks on his gastronomical/cosmic quest.

CREDITS

Tracks: Aria/Vorrei Incontrarti/La Mia Mente/Un Fiume Tranquillo

Personnel: Alan Sorrenti (vocals, acoustic guitar), Antonio Esposito (drums, percussion), Vittorio Nazzaro (bass, lead classic guitar), Albert Prince (Hammond organ, accordion, mellotron, synth harp), Tony Bonfils (bow bass), Jean Costa (trombone), André Lajdli (trumpet), Jean-Luc Ponty (violin)

Producer: Corrado Bacchelli

Released: 1972

Recorded: Sonic and RCA studios, Rome; Europa Sonor studio, Paris; SEED studio, Nice

Current availability: CD and vinyl reissues (Universal/EMI/Harvest, 2018)

Libretto Blaster

This month's sublime rediscovery: Tim Buckley-charged Italian prog-folk-jazz.

Alan Sorrenti
Aria

HARVEST, 1972

"IN THOSE TIMES, creativity was top of the line," says Alan Sorrenti, casting his mind back five decades. "We were so strong in Italy that record companies were forced to follow us, which is the opposite of now. I was just 21… we could do so much, in every sense. And from that period comes *Aria*."

Italian progressive rock remains somewhat underappreciated internationally, with only PFM (via ELP's patronage) and Goblin (via director Dario Argento's soundtracks) crossing over to UK culthood. Whither Banco Del Mutuo Soccorso, Area, Museo Rosenbach and (fronted by Sorrenti's sister Jenny) Saint Just? But even in this progressive company, Sorrenti was an outlier, with *Aria* an enthralling, intense 40 minutes eschewing the genre's core instrumental dexterity for the rapture and fluidity of Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* with aspects of Italian favourites Van Der Graaf Generator. Most important were Sorrenti's ecstatic vocal incantations reminiscent of Tim Buckley's jazz period, as forged in the crucible of space rock and the classical folk of southern Europe.

Sorrenti thinks he was "lucky for two reasons." Firstly, through his Welsh mother, he spent time in Aberystwyth and, in the later '60s, London (his cousins owned a fish and chip shop in Acton). "An unbelievable time," he sighs. "I saw Canned Heat, Cream… to watch King Crimson in a theatre was special." Second, home was the bustling hilltop district of Vomero, "the London of Naples. A record shop imported lots of records, and my friend Umberto Telesco [who shot *Aria*'s cover] also introduced me to rock, progressive, alternative folk. That's how I discovered Tim Buckley. He became an incredible teacher to me, to push my voice to the limit." (Sorrenti's exultations inspired one commentator to liken the singer to, "one who has eaten a mellotron").

With his parents both (non-professional) singers, the young Alan had "inherited their gift," but expanded his creativity by writing songs. Encouraged by drummer Antonio Esposito, Sorrenti sent a tape to the national TV/radio broadcaster RAI, which subsequently led to the Italian wing of EMI, whose progressive offshoot Harvest would release *Aria*.

Produced in various studios in Italy and France, *Aria* boldly begins with the side-long title track, an interlinked suite where Sorrenti's wordless arabesques unfurl over glistening folk-jazz colours before the opening lyrics, roughly translating as, "In every corner of my room, I am looking for you/In the labyrinths of my mind, I'm chasing you…"

"I was writing about visions," he says. "It was the time of LSD, which told me that reality was bigger than the life I could see. In *Aria*, I imagine I'm flying over, like some kind of gothic vision by Ken Russell. I find something, then I lose it, that's the process. I explain it better in [side two opener] Vorrei Incontrarti [in English, I Would Like To Meet You]; I'm looking for you, but you are submerged in the people. It's like a Homeric dream. For a moment, I have this love, and then it's out of reach. It's a reality we all experience."

Closer Un Fiume Tranquillo [AKA A Tranquil River] expressed his hopes for spiritual peace. "My sub-conscious was telling me something about what I might become," he says. "In 1988 I became a Buddhist. *Aria* was my connection to the universe. Someone described it as a cosmic orgasm!"

To support his orgasmic quest, he was fortunate to call on the pioneering jazz-rock violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, whose manager was a friend of *Aria*'s producer Corrado Bacchelli, for a solo that echoed the singer's vocals. In 1973, Van Der Graaf saxophonist David Jackson and Curved Air were guests on Sorrenti's second album *Come Un Vecchio Incensiere All'Alba Di Un Villaggio Deserto*, but neither album was released in the UK or US. It turns out that Sorrenti did re-record Vorrei Incontrarti in English, but he says he forgot until Universal released a bunch of rarities on 2018's *The Prog Years Box*.

Afterwards, he reoriented as a folk singer-songwriter, and it's hard to quantify the star-sailing mystic of *Aria* with the later incarnation, who charted at home in 1974 with a cover of the classical ballad Dicitencello Vuje before moving to the US in 1976 and progressing into danceable yacht rock, Europop and representing Italy in 1980's Eurovision Song Content (he came sixth). In 2022, he released his second album since 1992, the Afro-tinged *Oltre La Zona Sicura*, AKA *Beyond The Comfort Zone*. He concedes that it might be where he is heading next.

"I feel I am back where I started," Sorrenti concludes. "I'm independent, and my audience is not mainstream. I'm now moving towards making a new suite, but more punky and tribal, and my voice like it was before, more explosive. Before I went to America and learnt to technically sing, something inside me was shining. I'm glad I had that time in my life."

Martin Aston

"Someone described *Aria* as a cosmic orgasm!"
ALAN SORRENTI

Fotex/Shutterstock

the sisters of mercy

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FRI 22 LONDON CAMDEN ROUNDHOUSE
SAT 23 LONDON CAMDEN ROUNDHOUSE

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Grand designs: Keith Jarrett, Los Angeles, 1975 – his performances are beguiling, pioneering, beautiful and subversive.

Keith Jarrett

The great jazz pianist before and after *Köln*. By Andrew Male.

TAKE A QUICK glance at the 10 records opposite and one best-seller will be noticeable by its absence. Recorded at the Cologne Opera House on 24 January, 1975, Keith Jarrett's *The Köln Concert* is the best-selling solo album in jazz history with sales now well over 4 million. It's a record of undeniable hypnotic beauty and the story of its creation, concerning an exhausted and sleep-deprived Jarrett working with an imperfectly tuned Bösendorfer piano, yet summoning glistening meditative melodies and urgent patterns of repetition out of such adversity, only adds to the record's myth and allure. But what this *sui generis* recording has arguably never been is a gateway into Jarrett's back catalogue. You buy *The Köln Concert* (and statistically speaking, you have bought it) and you stop there. What this How To Buy aims to do is offer a way into the entire *oeuvre* of this 77-year-old Pennsylvania-born pianist, composer and multi-instrumentalist. The oldest release here is from 1973, the most recent 2013, and in those 40-plus years of releases (the majority of them on Manfred Eicher's ECM label) are some of the most beguiling, pioneering, beautiful and subversive jazz performances ever committed to tape.

Jarrett was a child prodigy, giving his first classical recital at the age of seven and touring with Art Blakey's New Jazz Messengers in the early 1960s while still a teenager. That precociousness is a defining quality of his playing and part of the job of this How To Buy has been to wheedle out the more ponderous and hubristic works in favour of those that simply illustrate his many strengths, including an ability to transform the technically complex into the emotionally resonant and, like Bill Evans and Ahmad Jamal before him, balance different voices in a chord, emphasising the different melodic lines through the use of space and silence.

Significantly, since the early '70s, Jarrett has been the leader of three outstanding groups, including his European Quartet (Jan Garbarek, Palle Danielsson and Jon Christensen), his American Quartet (saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian) and, since the early '80s, his Standards Trio with Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette. All three combos are represented here, as are Jarrett's multi-instrumental experiments and his explorations of the classical keyboard repertoire. And, finally, it's worth adding that in live performance Jarrett has a habit of mumbling, shouting and even whining like a small animal during moments of euphoric uplift. While I've tried to include live recordings where that is less in evidence, perhaps another approach is to embrace it and, like the ancient Japanese concept of wabi-sabi, recognise that there is beauty in imperfection, and beauty itself is imperfect.

> **"Jarrett transforms the technically complex into the emotionally resonant."**

Getty (2)

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Keith Jarrett LPs. Next month we want your Doors Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy The Doors' and we'll print the best comments.

10 Kenny Wheeler

Gnu High

ECM, 1976

You say: "Kenny Wheeler's *Gnu High* has KJ all over it and he's so good." Fred Matthews @fatherfrederick, via Twitter

These days, the idea of Keith Jarrett as sideman is not easily imagined, but whether it's his '60s stints with Charles Lloyd or his electric keyboard contributions to Miles Davis's *The Cellar Door Sessions 1970*, the pianist was an intelligent and hungry collaborator best showcased on this, his last recording as accompanist. By all accounts, Jarrett was uncomfortable with the session, but you'd never know. The chemistry between UK trumpeter Wheeler and Jarrett (plus drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Dave Holland) is one of conversational cool, the quartet sharing out their moments of solo improvisation and moving seamlessly between quiet mindful contemplation and exalted kinetic energy.

4 Jarrett, Garbarek, Danielsson, Christensen

Sleeper (Tokyo, April 16, 1979)

ECM, 2012

You say: "The European Quartet at the peak of their powers live." Samuel Robinson @SamuelE-Robinson, via Twitter

In the 2004 Keith Jarrett doc, The Art Of Improvisation, ECM label boss Manfred Eicher is asked how many unreleased live Jarrett recordings are in the archives. He replies, hesitantly: "One hundred?" It's therefore believable that this blistering 1979 set from Jarrett's 'European Quartet' (saxophonist Jan Garbarek, bassist Palle Danielsson, drummer Jon Christensen) could have sat unreleased for 33 years. From the tumbling, spiralling Personal Mountains to the slinky, buzzing-fly groove of Chant Of The Soil, this is the sound of four players in telepathic unison.

9 Keith Jarrett
Dmitri Shostakovich: 24 Preludes And Fugues

ECM, 1992

You say: "This is music which sounds as if it was written for Keith." Alan Rew @alanrew, via Twitter

Sometimes it's good to hear someone as assertive as Jarrett defer to a composer he considers a greater talent. That's partly the pleasure of listening to his classical recordings. The problem is that there are superior performers of say, Mozart's Piano Concertos or Bach's Goldberg Variations. Not so his performance of Shostakovich's 24 Preludes And Fugues. Written in 1950 for the Russian pianist Tatiana Nikolayeva, these are works inspired by Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier that cycle through the same kaleidoscope of moods – sweet, poignant, harsh, euphoric – as a Jarrett live improvisation. The pianist here draws out the emotions with a fluid, balletic joy.

8 Keith Jarrett
The Melody At Night, With You

ECM, 1999

You say: "A palate-cleanser between more adventuresome outings, but nothing finer." Jeff Breithaupt @jeffbreithaupt, via Twitter

Jarrett's return to recorded music following a bout of chronic-fatigue syndrome, finds him at his most subdued, introspective and unadorned. Recorded in Jarrett's home studio, it is the sound of the pianist utterly alone, playing standards without recourse to the energy and arrogance of improvisation that often defines his live solo work. As such, it is a work of exquisite melancholy, underpinned by Jarrett's belief that he was "transforming my disease into a song". His performances of Gershwin's Someone To Watch Over Me and I Loves You Porgy in particular possess a minimalist romantic beauty and a fragile sincerity that fair takes the breath away.

7 Keith Jarrett
Treasure Island

IMPULSE!, 1974

You say: "It sounds like he's trying a kind of rock music. My most played Jarrett." Darren Hayman, via Twitter

Often dismissed as Jarrett at his most commercial or mainstream but none the worse for that, Jarrett's first recording for Impulse! is essentially the American Quartet (Jarrett, Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden, Paul Motian) but with the game-changing addition of two percussionists (Danny Johnson and Guilherme Franco) and guitarist Sam Brown. It's an album defined by the two opening tracks: The Rich (And The Poor)'s lazy instrumental take on Bobby Charles's Bearsville soul sound, and Blue Streak, a whooping skronk variant of Vince Guaraldi's scores for Charlie Brown cartoons. Playful, aggressive, soulful, and often deeply funky, it's arguably the most non-cerebral fun that you can have listening to Keith Jarrett.

6 Keith Jarrett
No End

ECM, 2013

You say: "Keith Jarrett does Keiji Haino. This needs a vinyl reissue." Pete Gofton @pgoften, via Twitter

Probably the biggest surprise in the Jarrett catalogue is this archival home studio release from 1986, in which the pianist attempts to recapture the late-'60s "ecstatic freedom" of Haight-Ashbury, utilising Fender bass, drums, tablas, recorder and, most specifically, a Gibson solid-body electric guitar. Layered and overdubbed on a pair of 2-track Tandberg cassette recorders, the result is a series of free psychedelic jams that – accompanied by Jarrett's own meditative vocal mumbles and rudimentary drumming – remind of both the early-noughties electric guitar improvisations of Tetuzi Akiyama and the live Grateful Dead jam interlude before Playing In The Band kicks in. The linernotes say, "Play this music LOUD"; we concur.

5 Keith Jarrett
Hymns/Spheres

ECM, 1976

You say: "Extraordinary. Drones of majesty from an ancient pipe organ." @DanielNothing, via Twitter

Recorded in 1976 on the huge Karl Joseph Riepp pipe organ in the Benedictine Abbey in Ottobeuren, Germany at a time when Jarrett was experimenting with ways to express himself beyond the piano, these solo improvisations show him crafting a majestic space-age sacred music. Bookended by two grander declarative pieces of traditional praise – Hymn Of Remembrance and Hymn Of Release – here are nine improvised experiments in drone, dissonance, melody, reverberation and intonation. The results are a kind of meditative, polyphonic kosmische that is simultaneously haunting, psychedelic and sublime. Asked by ECM in 2003 to compile an anthology of his favourite works, Jarrett chose two tracks from *Hymns/Spheres*.

3 Keith Jarrett
The Survivors' Suite

ECM, 1977

You say: "Everyone is on fire here. Much gutsier than the (excellent) Standards Trio." Dan MacRae, @danmac50, via Twitter

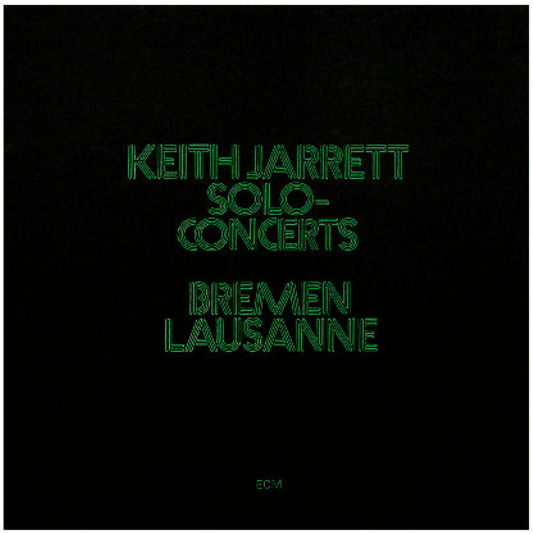
Together from 1971 to 1976, Jarrett's 'American Quartet' were ambitious, yet fractious. This recording – dedicated to Holocaust survivors, and written specifically for New York's Avery Fisher Hall where, said Jarrett, "the sound was not precise enough [for] fast tempos" – is a work of deliberate ritual. It begins as ghostly chamber jazz soundscape, Jarrett's plaintive bass recorder accompanied by skeletal percussion, before the players emerge from the shadows for a slow hypnotic dance. Part Two, by contrast, is wild, surging and chaotic, a hard-skronk cry of joy and release. One month later, the group would disintegrate on-stage, as captured on 1979's tense *Eyes Of The Heart*.

2 Keith Jarrett
At The Blue Note

ECM, 1995

You say: "If you can't spring for the 6-CD set, there's a single highlights disc which includes a magnificent Autumn Leaves." Nigel Wallis @Mole_9, via Twitter

In 1983, Jarrett recruited bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette to record a set of jazz standards at New York's Power Station, hoping to reconnect with jazz's shared "tribal language". Between 1983 and 2014 they released 20 albums, but their finest (seven) hour(s) remains 1995's 6-CD *At The Blue Note* set. Minimalist and intimate yet vast and otherworldly, it finds the trio shifting effortlessly from breathless rhythmic grooves to gorgeous pirouetting ballads. The single-disc set, *Saturday, June 4, 1994*, is exquisite, with a version of Autumn Leaves that best exemplifies Jarrett's description of the trio: "Every time we play it's the same material but a new planet."



Keith Jarrett
Solo-Concerts: Bremen/Lausanne

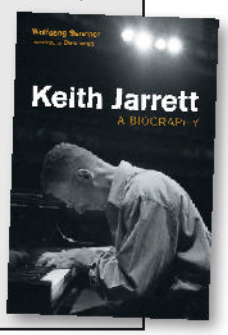
ECM, 1973

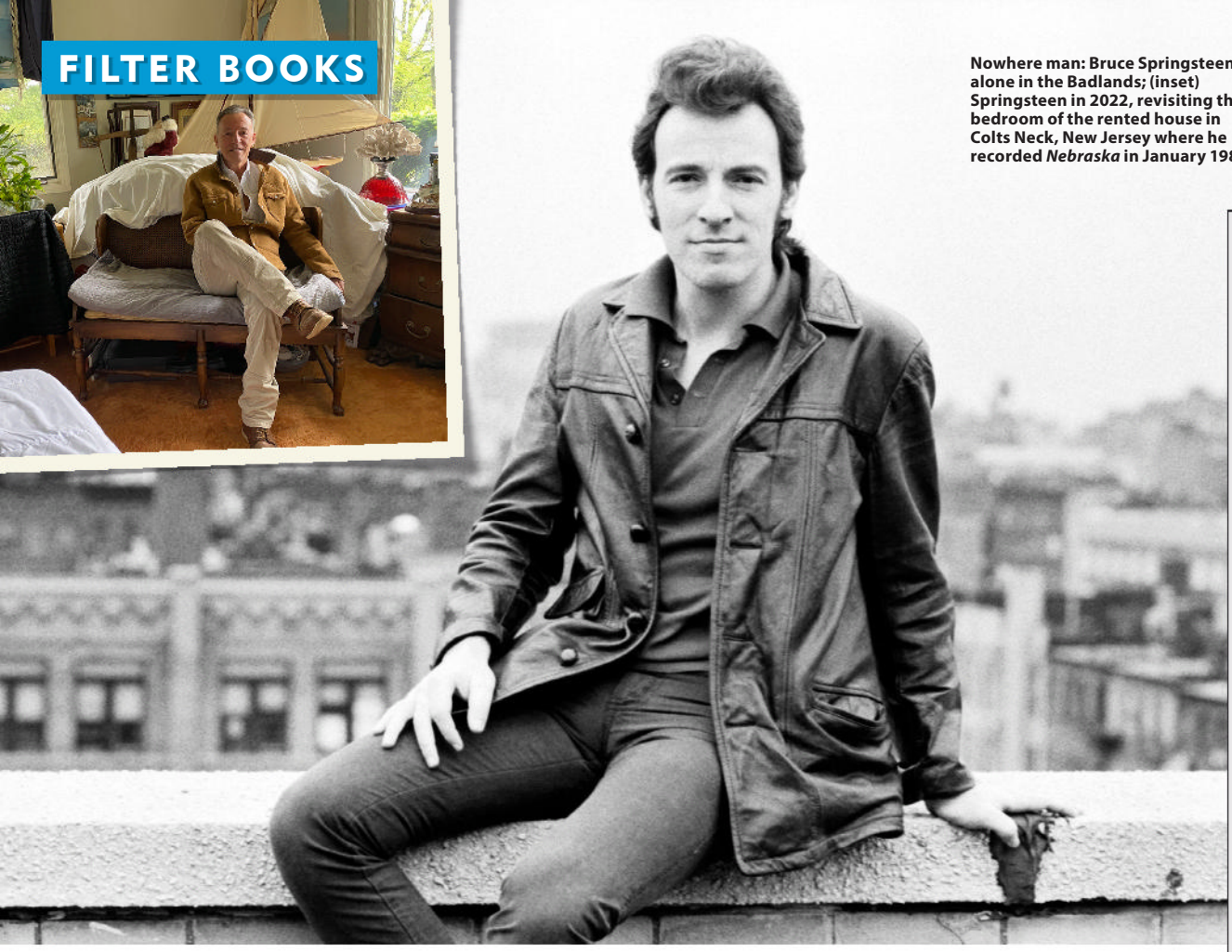
You say: There is *Bremen/Lausanne* then everything else. Nothing comes close to its sheer beauty, freedom and clarity." Mikayel Grigoryan @SuspectedLVO, via Twitter

Recorded in Switzerland and Germany in March and July of 1973, this is the *ne plus ultra* of the solo live Jarrett concert in all its improvisational glory. A blueprint for so many of his subsequent live releases, including 1975's *The Köln Concert* (see intro), it's the perfect entry point to understanding – and enjoying – what Jarrett is doing; the then-28-year-old pianist beginning with nothing and embarking on a process of self-discovery. Ideas begin in reflective vamps drawn from gospel, blues, classical and Latin elements before spinning off into mesmeric abstraction, hammered boogie-woogie rhythms moving into trance-like euphoria. If you dig this, the next destination is *Sun Bear Concerts* (ECM, 1978), six 75-minute discs of continuous explorations of rhythm and melody that border on the spiritual in their ability to convey emotional transcendence.

NOW DIG THIS

Ridiculed and dismissed by purists, 1968's *Restoration Ruin* is Keith Jarrett's folk-pop LP. Recorded when the pianist was playing with The Charles Lloyd Quartet and hanging out with the Grateful Dead, it's an endearing blend of jazz, rock, improvisation, and naive Donovan-esque ballads and, at times, sounds like a great, lost Arthur Russell LP. If you want to dig deeper into the philosophy and beliefs of Jarrett you must watch 2005 documentary, The Art Of Improvisation. Also seek out Ian Carr's 1992 biography The Man And His Music. Wolfgang Sandner's Keith Jarrett: A Biography is more up to date, but lacks a little flair.





Nowhere man: Bruce Springsteen, alone in the Badlands; (inset) Springsteen in 2022, revisiting the bedroom of the rented house in Colts Neck, New Jersey where he recorded *Nebraska* in January 1982.

The big chill

The inside story of Bruce Springsteen's 1982 masterpiece *Nebraska*. By Keith Cameron.

Deliver Me From Nowhere

★★★★

Warren Zanes

PENGUIN/RANDOM HOUSE. £23

ACCORDING TO himself, Bruce Springsteen is "a conceptual optimist yet a personal pessimist". The duality has defined his entire career, and more often than not the light has prevailed. Only a supreme conceptual optimist could turn a song about depression into a glitter ball-friendly hit single. Yet there would have been no Dancing In The Dark without the preceding *Nebraska*, the one record where Bruce Springsteen admitted no light whatsoever.

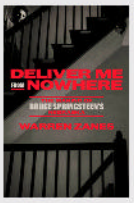
"I wanted to know where *Nebraska* came from, [and] what it led to," declares author Warren Zanes. In BruceWorld, *Nebraska* is both Holy Grail and Death Star, still resolutely elusive even after 40 years, an album recorded alone in a bedroom onto a cassette, its skeletal, otherworldly songs thwarting subsequent attempts with the E Street Band to be whipped into a more digestibly Springsteenian form. There was no tour, no interviews, no explanation why America's ascendant rock'n'roll star was following up his first Number 1, *The River*, with a bleak album about murder and isolation. It's also the album Springsteen regards as possibly his best. So as the key to understanding the artist and the man, *Nebraska* requires a biography to match – and Deliver Me From Nowhere truly delivers.

In January 1985, the teenage Warren Zanes was guitarist with Boston bar-busters The Del Fuegos when Bruce Springsteen walked into their dressing room at a North Carolina club, declared himself a fan, then joined them on-stage. Zanes duly brings a musicianly rigour to his dissection of *Nebraska*, poring over the cultural and historical contexts which influenced Springsteen: the music of Hank Williams and Suicide, the novels of Flannery O'Connor, and the story of '50s America's first celebrity serial killers, as portrayed in Terrence Malick's 1973 film Badlands and voiced by Springsteen in *Nebraska*'s title track. He also emphasises the importance of its accidental genesis, the fact that Springsteen pressed 'record' on his new TEAC 144 4-track with no intention that these demos would be his next album, rather than sketches for what became *Born In The USA*. As the music industry rushed to greet the digital dawn, says Zanes, Springsteen made "a cave painting in the age of photography".

The author draws on new interviews with key associates, but securing the participation of Springsteen himself greatly broadens the book's emotional scope. Until his 2016 memoir, Springsteen had barely discussed the personal demons which inspired *Nebraska* and led to a subsequent breakdown. Zanes takes us with him into Springsteen's New Jersey home, just a few miles from the house where *Nebraska* was made and not much further from his childhood home in Freehold, host to the trauma that seeded *Nebraska*'s desperate core. "It destroyed me and it made me," Springsteen says. In one exchange, Zanes gamely compares the conjoined *Nebraska/Born In The USA* diptych to the heroic trials of Homer's Odyssey, with Springsteen hilariously deadpan in response: "Go on"… "Incredible".

Springsteen's manager Jon Landau characterises *Nebraska* as the "art movie" to *BITUSA*'s "Star Wars". By going with *Nebraska* first, Bruce Springsteen gave himself artistic immortality. Whatever else he did, or is yet to do, he can always play the ultimate get-out-of-jail card: he's the guy who made *Nebraska*. "Hundred years from now, what's gonna play well?" Springsteen asks Warren Zanes, before answering his own rhetorical question. "That record will play pretty well."

"By putting out *Nebraska* first, Bruce Springsteen gave himself artistic immortality."



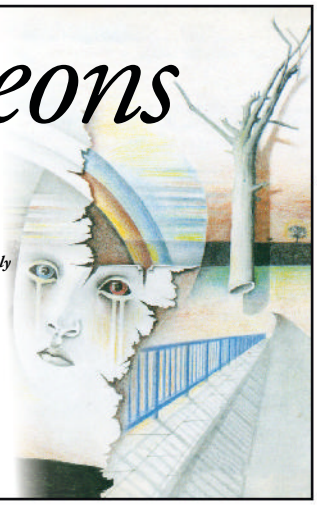
WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- As well as nine of the 10 songs on *Nebraska*, the Maxell home demos cassette Bruce Springsteen sent to Jon Landau in early 1982 contained: Bye Bye Johnny; Born In The USA; Downbound Train; Pink Cadillac; Child Bride; Losin' Kind – the last two remain officially unreleased in any form.
- *Nebraska* is his only album not to feature an image of Springsteen on either its front or back cover. "I knew I shouldn't be on [there]… The world I was describing, that's what the cover needed to be."
- Discussing his breakdown, Springsteen identifies the *Nebraska* material as "the first time, pre-analysis, of a deeply investigative period of my life, where I started to question what's the matter with me."
- Among the artists paying tribute to *Nebraska* – including Rosanne Cash and Richard Thompson – Steve Earle credits Springsteen with kickstarting his stalled career when The Boss bought *Guitar Town* at LA's Tower Records. "It ended up in Billboard," says Earle. "I sold 50,000 records the next week."

Getty/The Estate Of David Gahr; Warren Zanes

Chameleons

+ LESLEY WOODS (AU PAIRS)



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Thursday 22 June — ***Newcastle, Riverside***
Friday 23 June — ***Edinburgh, Liquid Room***
Saturday 24 June — ***Glasgow, The Garage***
Monday 26 June — ***Aberdeen, Lemon Tree***
Wednesday 28 June — ***Norwich, Epic Studios***
Thursday 29 June — ***Cambridge, Junction***
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+ squire

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Sat 07 Oct - Newcastle, Riverside
Thu 19 Oct - Liverpool, The Cavern
Fri 20 Oct - Leeds, Brudenell Social Club
Sat 21 Oct - Sheffield, Leadmill
Fri 27 Oct - Southampton, The Brook
Sat 28 Oct - Cardiff, The Globe
Fri 03 Nov - Birmingham, The Crossing
Sat 04 Nov - Manchester, Rebellion
Fri 10 Nov - Shoreham-by-Sea, The Ropetackle
Sat 11 Nov - Guildford, The Holroyd
Fri 17 Nov - Edinburgh, Voodoo Rooms
Sat 18 Nov - Glasgow, Oran Mor
Fri 24 Nov - London, 229
Sat 25 Nov - Gillingham, The Great Hall

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with Paul Cook (Sex Pistols)

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Sat 28 Oct 2023 — Manchester, Rebellion
Fri 03 Nov 2023 — Cambridge, Junction
Sat 04 Nov 2023 — Royal Leamington Spa, The Assembly
Fri 17 Nov 2023 — Gillingham, The Great Hall
Sat 18 Nov 2023 — London, Islington Assembly Hall

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FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER — BRIGHTON — PATTERNS	FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER — LIVERPOOL — HANGAR 34
SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER — NORWICH — WATERFRONT STUDIO	SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER — BIRMINGHAM — THE CROSSING
FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER — EXETER — PHOENIX	FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER — LONDON — ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
SATURDAY 28 OCTOBER — SOUTHAMPTON — 1865	SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER — LONDON — ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL

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NOV 4	EXETER	PHOENIX
NOV 11	CANTERBURY	GULBENKIAN
NOV 24	BLACKBURN	KING GEORGES HALL
NOV 25	GLASGOW	ORAN MOR
NOV 29	CAMBRIDGE	JUNCTION
NOV 30	BURY ST EDMUNDS	APEX
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DEC 2	SHOREHAM	ROPETACKLE
DEC 8	GILLINGHAM	GLASSBOX
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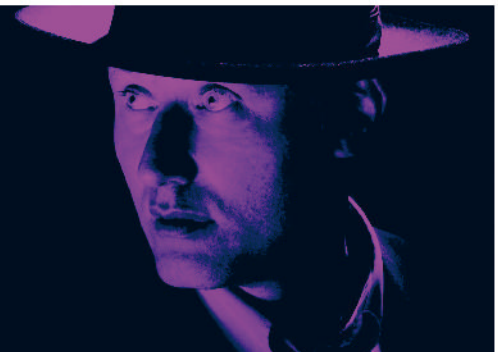
SAT 20 JAN — MANCHESTER — O_2 RITZ	SAT 17 FEB — BIRMINGHAM — THE CROSSING	SAT 09 MAR — EXETER — CORN EXCHANGE	SAT 30 MAR — PERTH — CONCERT HALL
THU 25 JAN — COLCHESTER — ARTS CENTRE	THU 22 FEB — NEWCASTLE — WYLAM BREWERY	FRI 15 MAR — CARDIFF — TRAMSHED	SUN 31 MAR — ABERDEEN — MUSIC HALL
FRI 26 JAN — BEDFORD — CORN EXCHANGE	FRI 23 FEB — LEEDS — BECKETT UNIVERSITY	SAT 16 MAR — LIVERPOOL — EVENTIM OLYMPIA	THU 04 APR — COVENTRY — HMV EMPIRE
SAT 27 JAN — BASINGSTOKE — THE ANVIL	SAT 24 FEB — SCARBOROUGH — THE SPA	THU 21 MAR — WORTHING — THE VENUE	SAT 06 APR — LONDON — INDIGO AT THE O2
THU 01 FEB — BLACKPOOL — VIVA	FRI 01 MAR — BURY ST. EDMUNDS — THE APEX	FRI 22 MAR — GILLINGHAM — THE GREAT HALL	
FRI 02 FEB — BLACKBURN — KING GEORGES HALL	SAT 02 MAR — SOUTHEND — CLIFFS PAVILION	SAT 23 MAR — MARGATE — DREAMLAND	



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the venue

saturday 04 november
london
the forge

thursday 23 november
manchester
blues kitchen

friday 24 november
leeds
the wardrobe

jah wobble

& the invaders of the heart

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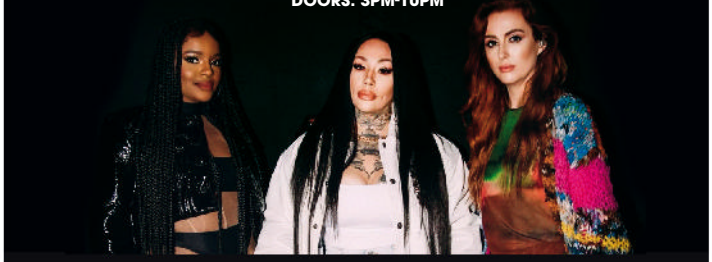

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03 JUNE	MANCHESTER	O2 RITZ	
04 JUNE	NORWICH	EPIC STUDIOS	
07 JUNE	EDINBURGH	QUEENS HALL	
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Season Of The Witch: The Book Of Goth

★★★★

Cathi Unsworth

NINE EIGHT. £22

Superb history of the dark and all its risings.

Few are better qualified than novelist, journalist and life-long child of the night Cathi Unsworth to tease apart the hairspray-sticky strands of goth and see what lies beneath. Raised in a remote Norfolk farmhouse where she feasted on Dennis Wheatley and John Peel, Unsworth can read all the runes: the difference between dressing like Ian Astbury or Kirk Brandon, for example. Yet this excellent cultural history sweeps beyond the personal, hook-and-eyeing Thatcher-age dysfunction – the Yorkshire Ripper, the Miners' Strike, Aids – into the music and aesthetics of an evolving underground. From London to Leeds, Berlin to Bradford, the goth spectrum is analysed in all its dark variety, Siouxsie Sioux, The Sisters Of Mercy and The Cure alongside Diamanda Galás and Einstürzende Neubauten. Portraits of "gothparents" – Link Wray, Fenella Fielding and Billie Holiday included – stud the smartly detailed text, while an appendix generously advises on "building a goth library". It's as monumental as its subject, a real temple of love.

Victoria Segal

Clean Living Under Difficult Circumstances

★★★

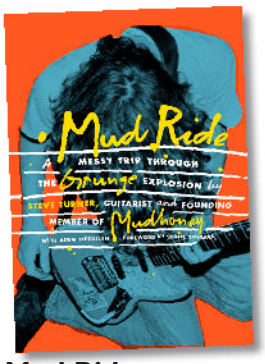
Eddie Piller

MONORAY. £20

The story of the Mod Revival and its '80s aftermath by the charismatic Acid Jazz label boss and real-life ace face.

Love it or hate it – and like Paul Weller, Eddie Piller's life has been defined by it – Mod is one of Britain's most successful youth cults. But what happened to it after The Jam split in 1982 and bowling alleys nationwide no longer feared mass theft of their shoes? In this conversational history-from-below, Piller, the son of an East End bookmaker, reveals all, charting first-hand the movement's difficult '80s in the subcultural margins. Cue toe-curling violence with skinheads, scooter boy gangs and rival outfits, none of which could dampen a collective Mod thirst for rare R&B and soul 45s and neat vintage clobber. A parallel story emerges of Piller's advancement as an indie label boss and band manager, as entertaining cameos abound – Weller, Georgie Fame, Rick Wakeman, Larry Page – plus there's also a chilling run-in with the IRA in Dublin, who took exception to a lanky teenager with an army haircut and Union flag sticker on his Vespa. The book ends with Mod's timely liberation at the hands of acid jazz and ecstasy, paving the way, one assumes, for an equally lively part two…

Pat Gilbert



Mud Ride

★★★

Steve Turner

OMNIBUS PRESS. £18.99

"A Messy Trip" with Mudhoney's guitarist.

While 2013's recently updated Mudhoney: The Sound And The Fury From Seattle by MOJO's Keith Cameron consummately nailed the definitive story of Mark Arm's troupe, there's always scope for a unique perspective, not least from their lovable fuzz-guitar henchman. Steve T serves up a linear, characteristically no-frills memoir, with high-school BMX/skateboarding japes segueing into Devo/hardcore fanaticism, conscription into three-years-senior Arm's Mr Epp And The Calculations and discovery of Super-Fuzz pedals, when "Gabriel's trumpet sounded" for him. This reluctant hero soon begins to feel also slightly disinclined as a narrator, not the man to make a drama out of the crisis that grunge became – certainly not on the industrial scale of Mark Lanegan's Sing Backwards And Weep. Arm's drug problem is discreetly pared down to generalised facts, for instance, and Turner soon pleads ignorance on Nirvanamania (busy with side projects) and Kurt Cobain's passing (on tour with Pearl Jam). As such, Mud Ride is one for completists, like Turner himself.

Andrew Perry

The Lost Album Of The Beatles: What If The Beatles Hadn't Split Up?

★★★★

Daniel Rachel

CASSELL. £14.99

September 9, 1969. John: "We'll do another album. We'll all do four songs. How's that?"

One after *Abbey Road*? Beatlists have long fantasised that The End was not quite the end, that the centripetal force of those four fast friends would override the centrifugal stresses for one last hurrah, with the early solo overspill songs Beatled after all as the cold grey light of a new decade dawned from the sunset of '69. A fun pub discussion and online fan forum staple, but is it a book? Now retitled, musician and author Daniel Rachel's 2021 forensic investigation (new to paperback) makes a strong case for looking afresh at the evidence. His conclusion: time and again a practical solution presented itself in vain to the conflict between their group chemistry and the desire to escape its restrictive practices. His dream album (and EP) *'Four Sides Of The Beatles'* makes for a fascinatingly detailed read but not necessarily everyone's choice as a selection, still less a running order. Ringo sings all of side four?

Mat Snow

I Thought I Heard You Speak: Women At Factory Records

★★★

Audrey Golden

WHITE RABBIT. £22

Golden's authorial debut brings a missing feminist perspective to the story of Factory Records.

"Narrative oral histories are necessarily subjective." With this important note on the genre in mind, feminist and Factory Records aficionado Golden outlines her intention to present a different angle on the usual story of the legendary Manchester label. Golden lets her impressively diverse cast of characters – including the label's artists, office employees and service workers – take centre-stage. Perhaps inevitably, confessions, thanksgivings and refutations abound. Frustratingly, some stories are left insufficiently investigated or lack details. Although the content is fascinating (particularly, the chapters on The Haçienda and Yasmine Lakhaney, the first woman bouncer), sometimes the book reads as if it were a script for a documentary series. While Women At Factory doesn't claim objectivity, it would be nice to see these monologues sewn into a broader context and background research.

Irina Shtreis

Ramsey Lewis: Gentleman Of Jazz – A Life In Music

★★★★

Ramsey Lewis with Aaron Cohen

BLACKSTONE PUBLISHING. £20

Jazz pianist's Barack Obama-endorsed autobiography.

A musical catalyst emblematic of '60s civil rights optimism, Lewis, who sadly died just after completing this engaging autobiography, was raised in Chicago's Cabrini Green housing project and championed the city his whole life. Playing piano from the age of four, he learned gospel in church, classical at school then in 1955 on forming his eponymous trio combined jazz and R&B to create his own swinging sound. Best known for his '60s jazz pop instrumental covers – The 'In' Crowd, Hang On Sloopy etc – he also had an experimental side: for example, 1968's *Mother Nature's Son*, his innovative re-imagining of *The White Album*, and the jazz-funk fusion of 1974's *Sun Goddess* produced by Maurice White. In the foreword, co-writer Aaron Cohen likens this musical approach to Miles Davis, with Lewis, as mentor, shaping music and lives. Key collaborators including Philip Bailey and Verdine White add weight to the theory. A terrific, engaging read.

Lois Wilson

In goth we trust: Siouxsie Sioux in 1979, cover star of Season Of The Witch.

Getty

Iron curtain call: Blood, Sweat & Tears on-stage in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1970; (inset, from top) crowd control in Bucharest, Romania; BS&T's trumpeter Lew Soloff meets fans in Zagreb.

The truth about selling out

They were the biggest rock band in the US. Then Richard Nixon got involved. By Grayson Haver Currin.

What The Hell Happened To Blood, Sweat & Tears?

★★★★

Dir: John Scheinfeld

JESSE JAMES FILMS/CREWNECK PRODUCTIONS. C/ST

DID NIXON'S State Department cause Blood, Sweat & Tears to bleed out prematurely? That's the implicit premise of What The Hell Happened To Blood, Sweat & Tears?, John Scheinfeld's fascinating investigation about the sudden implosion of what was, at least momentarily, the United States' most popular rock band. For half a century, their seven-show trek as rock'n'roll diplomats through three Eastern Bloc strongholds during the summer of 1970 was seen as a spectacular sell-out blunder, the nonet's mighty horns and singer David Clayton-Thomas's ceaseless swagger brandished as a megaphone of the state. But their continued existence, Scheinfeld's Cold War excavation suggests, was simply a chip in a game of international brinkmanship.

By 1970, Blood, Sweat & Tears had become a cannonball amid the American charts, their delightfully chimerical self-titled second album becoming a sensation due to its string of indelible singles. And When I Die, You've Made Me So Very Happy, Spinning Wheel: they weren't guileless idealists, but their apolitical aplomb offered something of a reprieve from Nixon's wars, either frigid or ferocious, and the doomed arts they inspired. When they returned to the United States after their state-sponsored, three-week, fee-waived run into Romania, Poland and Yugoslavia, they told fans disenchanted with democracy that communism was, well, as frightening as they had heard. The audiences instantly turned. They were now a countercultural punchline – "Blood, Sweat and Bullshit!" as Abbie Hoffman punned in a picket outside a subsequent Madison Square Garden gig. The band steadily disintegrated, the war of un-hip attrition costing them both their members and their masses.

But a few years ago, drummer Bobby Colomby told Scheinfeld the band's side of this long-infamous rock fail. The director tracked down administration records (including a Kissinger-Nixon exchange suggesting the band as propaganda pawns) about the trip and a shelved State Department documentary, a feel-good chronicle meant to make the United States appear like altruistic cultural ambassadors. When Clayton-Thomas, a Canadian, was threatened with deportation, the band's manager and the State Department struck a deal to make Blood, Sweat & Tears the first (mostly) American rock band behind the Iron Curtain. There were misgivings, especially from the band's resident radical, guitarist Steve Katz, but they were overridden – by naiveté, ambition, duty? Whatever the reason, it was a pyrrhic scenario for Blood, Sweat & Tears: extol the Eastern Bloc and further enrage the government, or excoriate it and alienate the movement back home.

What The Hell Happened To Blood, Sweat & Tears? is an absorbing spy film made with smuggled footage, an incisive history lesson about international relations, and an intriguing hypothetical alternative to how the '70s may have otherwise sounded. But above all, it works as a cautionary tale for now about the risks we take to endure and the rushes we make in judgement, without all the facts. Blood, Sweat & Tears were not committed propagandists; that they appeared to be was, of course, a career-crippling coup by actual propagandists.

> "The war of un-hip attrition cost them dearly."

Laura Soloff (2), Izzy

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Despite its musical pep and its lyrical heaviness, And When I Die was a coping mechanism for soldiers in Vietnam, a bit of gallows humour for their fetid conditions and failing efforts.
- Clive Davis agreed to sign the band to Columbia the first time he saw them at the Greenwich Village's Cafe Au Go Go. "I had never seen horns used this way," he says.
- Of all the things the band did to annoy Romanian officials, it was Clayton-Thomas's insistence on throwing a gong on-stage that irked most. Authorities threatened to cancel the band's second show there unless he promised not to do it. He tossed it, anyway.
- Blood, Sweat & Tears' detractors were so miffed by their criticism of communism that one publication suggested they even be called the "Fascist Rock Band."

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SEPTEMBER 2023

11 SWANSEA PATTI PAVILION
12 MARGATE DREAMLAND
13 LINCOLN THE ENGINE SHED
15 BLACKBURN KING GEORGE'S HALL
16 BUCKLEY THE TIVOLI
18 SUNDERLAND THE FIRE STATION
19 ABERDEEN BEACH BALLROOOM
21 EDINBURGH O_2 ACADEMY
22 MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
23 HOLMFIRTH THE PICTUREDROME
25 COVENTRY HMV EMPIRE
26 BRIGHTON CHALK
28 BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
29 TORQUAY THE FOUNDRY
30 LONDON O_2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN

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SAT 08 JULY
OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY2*
SUN 09 JULY
BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY*
MON 10 JULY
EXETER THE PHOENIX
WED 12 JULY
BOURNEMOUTH O_2 ACADEMY
THU 13 JULY
BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2
FRI 14 JULY
BEDFORD ESQUIRES
SAT 15 JULY
LONDON THE GARAGE

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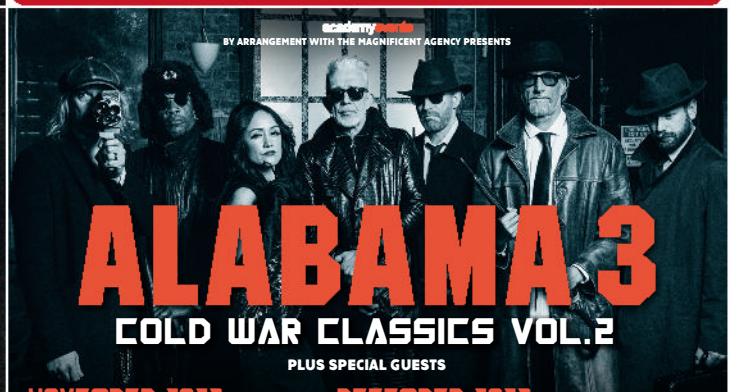

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FRI 24 / BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
SAT 25 / MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ

DECEMBER 2023
WED 06 / BOURNEMOUTH O_2 ACADEMY
FRI 08 / BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 09 / LONDON O_2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN

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SUN 19th MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
MON 20th SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2
TUE 21st COLCHESTER ARTS CENTRE
THU 23rd NORTHAMPTON
ROADMENDERS
FRI 24th BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 25th GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
SUN 26th BIRMINGHAM
O_2 ACADEMY2
TUE 28th BRIGHTON CHALK
WED 29th NORWICH EPIC STUDIOS
THU 30th BOURNEMOUTH
O_2 ACADEMY

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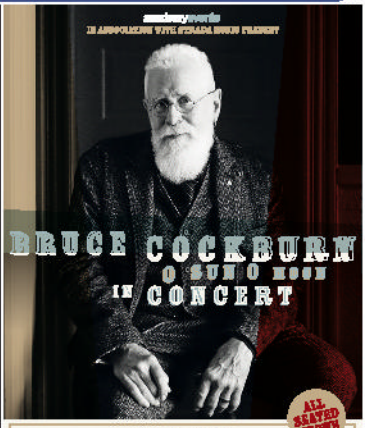

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THU 24TH OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
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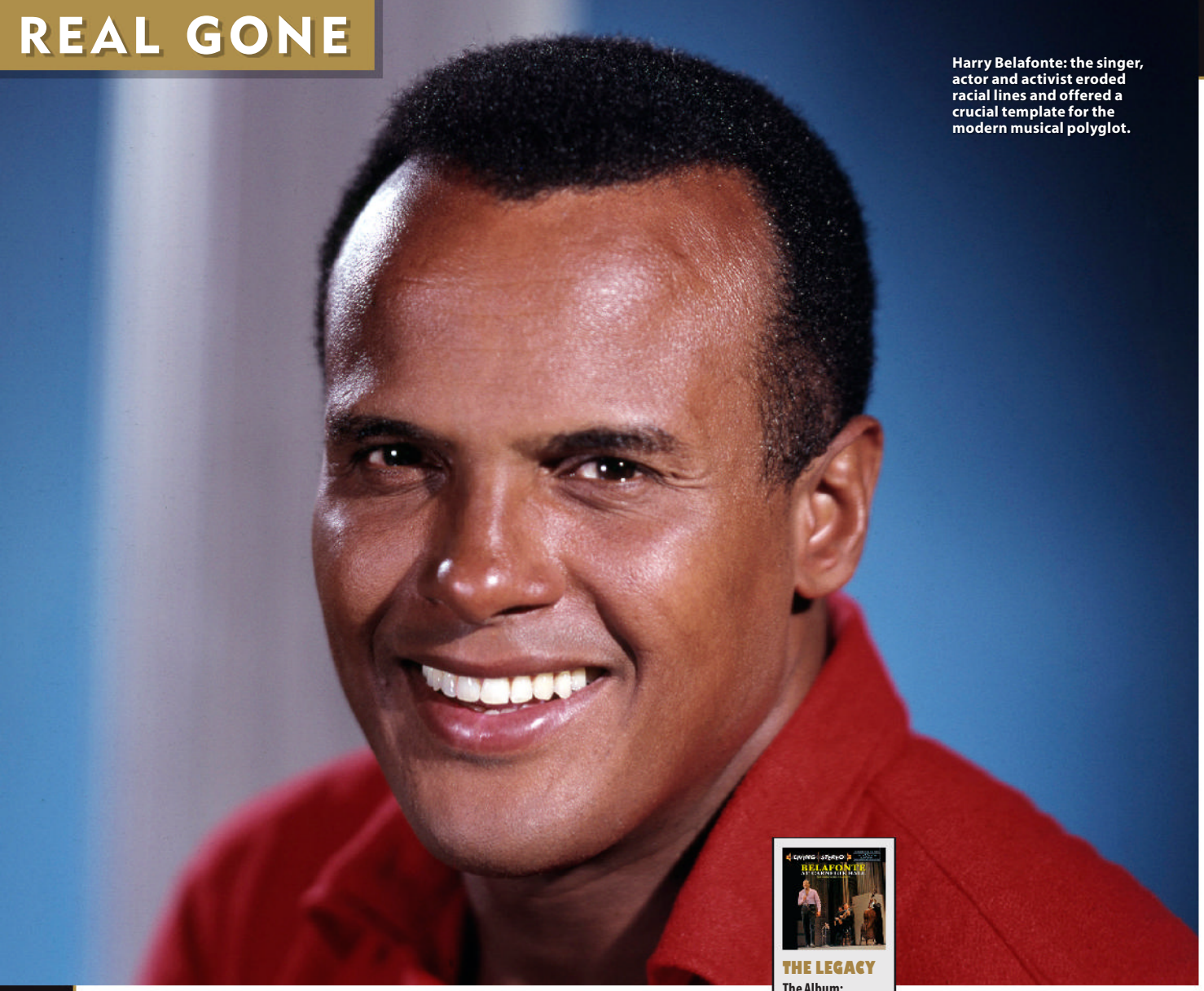


Harry Belafonte: the singer, actor and activist eroded racial lines and offered a crucial template for the modern musical polyglot.

My Lord, What A Livin'

Harry Belafonte, who used the stage to help reshape his country, left us on April 25.

IN FEBRUARY 1968, Harry Belafonte stepped in front of the camera and into the United States' tumultuous breach.

Johnny Carson asked Belafonte to take a turn as guest host for his popular Tonight Show, but the singer, actor, and activist was not content with being merely late-night's first black host. His interviewees, he demanded, needed to be integrated, too, a rarity in those days of the seemingly immortal Jim Crow. Belafonte succeeded, cajoling longtime confidant Martin Luther King Jr. into cracking a joke, marvelling at Buffy Sainte-Marie, and gabbing with the likes of Dionne Warwick and Sidney Poitier. These were the heady days just after the Tet Offensive, Richard Nixon's presidential announcement, and what would prove King's final sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Belafonte was a disarming and serious arbiter, a momentary eye in a country's worldwide storm.

By that point, Belafonte had been a superstar for much more than a decade, his multinational folk synthesis earning him controversial coronation as the 'King of Calypso' and his suave acting earning him roles that eroded racial lines (he had gone to acting school with Marlon Brando, his late-night jazz buddy). His presence was so striking that movie houses, especially in the American South, cancelled screenings because they were "stirring up trouble".

Belafonte was born in Harlem in 1927 to mixed-race parents who had immigrated from Jamaica. He spent several years in the West Indies, swimming and, as he told a Carnegie Hall crowd, "listening to the songs and the stories that the sailors used to tell." Inspired in part by the raw truth Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie delivered during a Village Vanguard performance, he became a magpie of international folk, not only delivering the sounds of the Caribbean to a country craving exotica but also singing Jewish wedding songs, Irish ballads, and African-American work numbers. Belafonte offered a crucial template for the modern musical polyglot. "Purism," as he said in 1959, "is the best cover-up for mediocrity."

> "Purism is the best cover-up for mediocrity."
> HARRY BELAFONTE

But as the Carson episode verifies, Belafonte never regarded himself as an entertainer. Instead, he wielded his stardom (and concomitant wealth) as a tool for his nation's most vulnerable in the battle for continuing civil rights. He bailed King out of Birmingham's infamous jail and, alongside Poitier, outran the Mississippi Ku Klux Klan to deliver $70,000 in cash to Freedom Summer organisers. In fact, his activism outlived his artistic ambitions. Recorded in Johannesburg, his final studio album, 1988's *Paradise In Gazankulu*, railed against apartheid. After the election of Donald Trump, he advised the Women's March in Washington DC and, three years later, lampooned "the empty promises of the flimflam man" in The New York Times. Belafonte remained dauntless, an enduring model for tandem citizenry and celebrity.

Belafonte died in late April at home in New York – at 96, he was just shy of an American century, during which he helped fulfil his country's grandest ideals, however tenuous he knew they might prove.

Grayson Haver Currin

THE LEGACY

The Album: *Belafonte At Carnegie Hall: The Complete Concert* (RCA Victor, 1959)

The Sound: Belafonte's life was so rich and varied that his music – the true font of his celebrity – can feel like a retrospective footnote. This commanding performance is a reminder of his consummate versatility and warmth as a singer, as he dips from Mexico to Jamaica, Ireland to Appalachia like a seasoned travel director. An enduring showcase for a truly curious mind.

Getty

Mark Stewart

Pop Group orator, reality prison escapee

BORN 1960

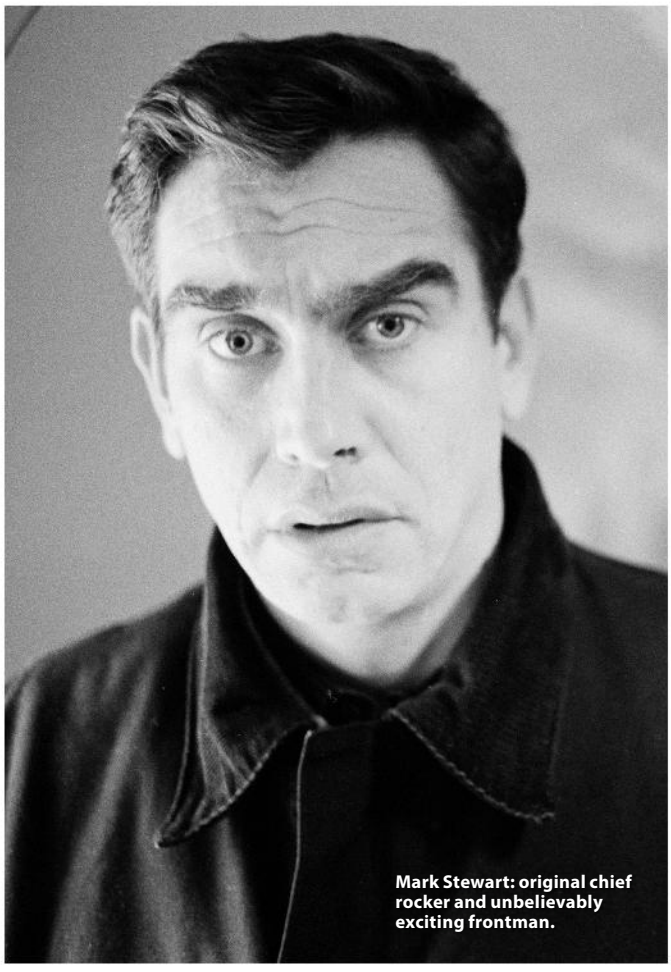
AS MARK STEWART told MOJO in 2015, there could be a "supernatural" aspect to the work of The Pop Group, the Bristol post-punk firestarters he fronted from 1977. "I don't know how it happens," he said, "and I wouldn't want to control it."

For more than four decades of what he called "walking between worlds", Stewart acted as lightning conductor, channel and communicator, transmitting confusion and stark clarity in equal measure to protean and visionary soundtracks. With The Pop Group, funk, dub, free jazz and Situationism were among the dissident mind-viruses vomited forth to a near-unbearable degree on the albums *Y* (1979) and *For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder?* (1980). Singles including She Is Beyond Good And Evil and We Are All Prostitutes similarly recast reality in their own image, but unclassifiable and ungovernable, the band split in 1981, having altered the DNA of Bristol music for decades to come. Massive Attack hailed Stewart as "original chief rocker"; another admirer further afield was a young Nick Cave, who called him an "unbelievably exciting frontman to whom I am deeply indebted."

Adding an increasing hip-hop influence to his inspirational mix, Stewart went on to record with New Age Steppers, alongside Ari Up, on Adrian Sherwood's On-U Sound label. Ever open to conspiracy, paranormality and invisible connections, his next project was the Maffia, building on The Pop Group's modus with the deep distortions of 1983's *Learning To Cope With Cowardice* (its version of Blake's Jerusalem is a key Stewart moment) and 1985's super-heavy *As The Veneer Of Democracy Starts To Fade*, the latter with help from Sugarhill Gang/Tackhead. Further releases on the Mute label followed. In 2010 The Pop Group reunited for blazing live shows and the albums *Citizen Zombie* (2015) and *Honeymoon On Mars* (2016). If an individual can be judged by the company he keeps, Stewart was a man of taste, with collaborators including Lee 'Scratch' Perry, William Burroughs, Richard Hell, Crass, Kenneth Anger and Keith Levene.

A giant, charismatic figure with a challenging intellect, his final album *Vs.* was released last year. MOJO last witnessed him at the On-U Sound 40th anniversary celebrations in London in April '22, a figure in shadow, still purging the darkness.

Ian Harrison



Mark Stewart: original chief rocker and unbelievably exciting frontman.

Joe Dilworth, Alamy, Getty (2)

Sweet Charles Sherrell: loud and proud.

Sweet Charles Sherrell

Funk soul brother

BORN 1943

"A LOT OF the stuff that Bootsy Collins and some other bass players did… like thumping the strings," opined James Brown of Nashville-born Sweet Charles Sherrell, "'Sweets' did first." Before hooking up with Brown in 1968, Sherrell drummed for a pre-fame Jimi Hendrix, then turned to the guitar, taught by Curtis Mayfield in exchange for washing the Chicago soul man's Jag. He swapped the guitar for a pawnshop-bought bass to back up Aretha Franklin, which put him on the radar of The Godfather, in whose band he frequently played from 1968 (he can be heard in full funk flow on that year's Say It Loud – I'm Black And I'm Proud). 'Sweets' also made a solo album for Brown's People label, 1974's *For Sweet People*, and released a second LP *Universal Love* in 2017. He died in the Netherlands, his home since 2000.

Charles Waring

Ivan Conti

Azymuth drummer

BORN 1946

A WORKING musician for 61 years, the drummer, multi-instrumentalist and producer Ivan Miguel 'Mamão' Conti Maranhão will be forever associated with Azymuth, the Rio de Janeiro jazz trio he co-founded in 1973, but his CV ranged from Marcos Valle to Madlib, and he was as at home playing funk as bossa nova or psychedelia. Early LPs with Valle – he was especially proud of *Fly Cruzeiro* – set the tone, but earlier work such as Eumir Deodato's *Os Catedráticos 73* displayed as much Buddy Rich as Wilson das Neves. Azymuth's Jazz Carnival was a surprise UK Top 20 hit in 1980, and Conti was still pushing boundaries on *Poison Fruit*, his 2019 solo LP, which mixed acoustic drums and electronics. His record label, Far Out, wasn't far wrong when it said in tribute that Conti was Brazil's answer to Bernard Purdie, Steve Gadd and Tony Allen.

David Hutcheon

"Conti was Brazil's answer to Bernard Purdie, Steve Gadd and Tony Allen."

Ray Shulman

Gentle Giant multi-instrumentalist

BORN 1949

IF PROG rock was a musical movement that valued virtuosic complexity, few bands played with such fiendish invention as Gentle Giant. Formed by the three Shulman brothers of Portsmouth from the ashes of Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, Gentle Giant purveyed a mix of rock, jazz, folk, medieval and modern chamber music of unrivalled intricacy. Listeners were either besotted or baffled. One of the key composers was youngest brother Ray, who principally played bass but also ran to guitar, trumpet, viola, recorder and backing vocals. His violin solos, circling round the quadraphonic PA, were a show highlight. When the band folded in 1980 after 10 years, Shulman wrote for commercials and video games and began producing – bringing his expert ear to albums by The Sundays, The Sugarcubes and Ian McCulloch. In recent years he was "delighted and surprised" as Gentle Giant's work was reissued and discovered by a new generation.

John Bungey

Ryuichi Sakamoto: conjurer of both ascetic precision and virtuoso flourish.

THE LEGACY

The Album: *async* (MILAN, 2017)

The Sound: Dissonant field recordings, elegiac piano fugues and Paul Bowles reading from his novel, The Sheltering Sky, allow Sakamoto to counterpoise post-cancer *carpe diem* optimism with poignant intimations of mortality. Setting out to make "non-traditional music that doesn't synchronise", this is sublime sound art grappling with the enigma of life itself.

Everyday Magician

Ryuichi Sakamoto, revered electronic pop pioneer and much-garlanded film composer, left us on March 28.

THE SON of a Tokyo literary editor father and hat designer-cum-piano teacher mother, Ryuichi Sakamoto's music, in its many manifestations, evinced a parallel marriage of ascetic precision and virtuoso flourish. It was evident in his best-known composition, the aching instrumental, Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence, part of the soundtrack to Nagisa Ōshima's eponymous 1983 movie, in which Sakamoto also acted, alongside David Bowie.

Born in 1952, and a pianist from the age of three, Sakamoto studied composition at Tokyo's National University of Fine Arts, abjuring classes on European serialism – he preferred Bach – and becoming immersed in computer music and synthesizers. He also played in extracurricular jazz combos and folk groups, all the while gorging on global sounds, from Afrobeat to early Kraftwerk – a stylistic cocktail that would eventually feed into the Yellow Magic Orchestra, the group he formed with Haruomi Hosono and Yukihiro Takahashi in 1978.

YMO's self-titled debut would successfully alloy avant-garde quirkiness with Sakamoto's earworm synth melodies, heralding the trio's rapid ascent to domestic superstar status. Three of YMO's subsequent albums would top the Japanese charts, with benchmarks like 1979's sequencer-propelled *Solid State Survivor* helping catalyse incipient electro-pop, while singles like Computer Game and Behind The Mask impacted European and American charts.

> **"I'm just delighted… to listen to the breeze move through the leaves of a tree."**
> RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

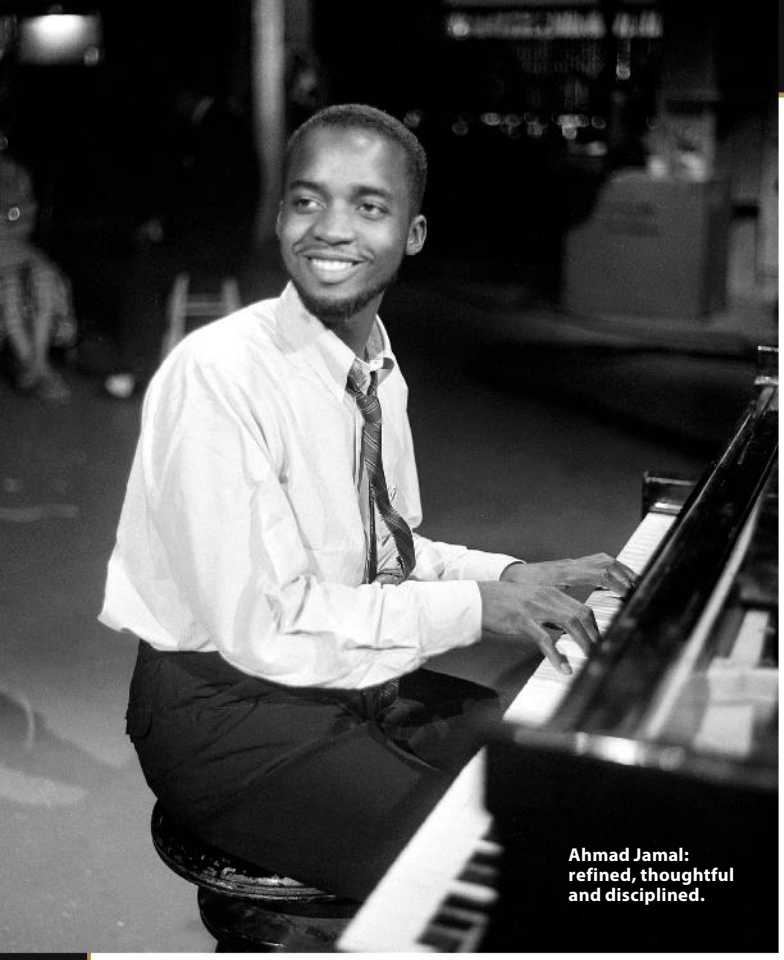
Dubbed 'The Professor' by his bandmates, pop stardom ultimately irked Sakamoto – "I love to be anonymous," he once averred – and after the band dissolved in 1983 he picked up a maverick solo career that had commenced with 1978's experimental pop curio *Thousand Knives* and would go on to include everything from 1983 electro workout Riot In Lagos to oriental-occidental mash-up LPs like 1987's *Neo Geo*, abetted by Bill Laswell and Iggy Pop, and the Satie-like études of 1999's *BTTB*, not to mention his opening ceremony music for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

A sometime collaborator with the similarly pop-averse David Sylvian (their 1983 single Forbidden Colours – a vocal reworking of Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence – was a major hit, nonetheless), his later minimal electronic albums with the likes of Alva Noto and Taylor Deupree were critically lauded. Soundtracks for Bernardo Bertolucci's The Last Emperor and The Sheltering Sky won Sakamoto a 1988 Oscar and a 1991 Golden Globe respectively, and his shelves boasted Grammys and a BAFTA for the extensive film work that occupied much of his later creative life.

Resident for three decades in lower Manhattan, Sakamoto was married three times and fathered four children, including pop chanteuse Miu Sakamoto. A committed environmentalist and opponent of nuclear energy, he survived throat cancer in 2014. "I'm just delighted to be living… to listen to the breeze move through the leaves of a tree", he declared. The disease would eventually snare him, but that ingenuous, enchanted spirit pervades the music he leaves behind.

David Sheppard

Getty



Ahmad Jamal: refined, thoughtful and disciplined.

Ahmad Jamal

Jazz piano great

BORN 1930

EXUDING AN air of elegance and subtlety in both music and life, Ahmad Jamal was a highly individual jazz pianist whose refined, thoughtful conception both set him apart from and made its mark on jazz piano history.

Born in Pittsburgh and christened Fritz Jones – the name change came in 1950 after trumpeter Idrees Sulieman introduced him to Islam – young Jamal studied classics and jazz simultaneously, and his formative influences included Errol Garner ("a milestone in pianistics"), Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum. Early trios followed the Nat Cole piano-guitar-bass model (with guitarist Ray Crawford developing the much imitated 'conga' effect by tapping his frets), though in the mid-1950s he replaced the guitar with drums and developed an atmospheric, spacious (Jamal insisted on "disciplined") style that found commercial success; his distinctive block-chorded version of folk tune Billy Boy was an early hit.

Miles Davis was taken with both his approach (Davis encouraged his pianists Red Garland and Wynton Kelly to emulate Jamal) and Jamal's nuanced, understated take on standards, several of which (Autumn Leaves, Just Squeeze Me, My Funny Valentine, etc) the trumpeter adapted for his own hugely influential recordings. Gil Evans artfully translated Jamal's composition New Rhumba for Davis's 1957 big band album *Miles Ahead*, though the best place to savour Jamal's 1950s pianistic majesty remains his classic *At The Pershing: But Not For Me* (Chess 1958) featuring the hit Poinciana, with the beautifully balanced trio completed by Israel Crosby (bass) and Vernell Fournier (drums).

Performing and recording prolifically into his late eighties, Jamal latterly displayed a more robust, percussive piano style, balancing denser-than-expected treatments of standards with tumultuous original compositions, a stylistic shift he put down to his mature confidence. "You have a greater flow of ideas when you have more confidence," he once said. "It's more fluidity, fluency."

Chris Ingham

Seymour Stein

The sire of Sire

BORN 1942

WHEN HE was 13, Brooklynite Seymour Stein hung out at Billboard magazine to research his great passion, the pop charts. As a young man, he was mentored by George Goldner at the Red Bird label and by King Records' Syd Nathan, who sent him out as James Brown's tour manager in 1961. After Stein met producer Richard Gottehrer at the Brill Building, they founded Sire records in 1968. The independent had a freak hit with Focus's Hocus Pocus in 1973, but more lasting success followed after punk broke: aided by his wife Linda, Stein would sign acts including Ramones, Talking Heads and Madonna, and later Lou Reed, Brian Wilson and Ice-T. With an ear for British talent, Sire also released Depeche Mode, The Smiths, Echo & The Bunnymen, Pet Shop Boys, Madness and The Cure. "I like to hear great songs," he told MOJO in 2018, "I don't jump on bandwagons." He was also Vice President at Warner Bros, who had owned Sire since 1978, and helped set up the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation in 1983. After retirement in 2018, he published his memoir, Siren Song: My Life In Music.

Ian Harrison

> "I like to hear great songs. I don't jump on bandwagons."
> SEYMOUR STEIN

Jah Shaka

Sound system heavyweight

BORN C.1950

JAH SHAKA brought righteous energy and social conscience to UK sound system culture. Born in Clarendon parish, Jamaica circa 1950, he arrived in London in 1956 and played harmonica, drums and guitar in school and church before joining Freddie Cloudburst's sound system in south-east London, playing Motown and R&B in the mid '60s. By the early '70s, he was running his own outfit, playing dub and steppers at high volume to a fanbase which included The Slits and Public Image Ltd. In 1980 he cameo'd in Franco Rossi's film Babylon, and set up the Jah Shaka Music label, whose releases included the *Commandments Of Dub* series and collaborations with Horace Andy, Max Romeo and Mad Professor. He also founded the Jah Shaka Foundation in 1992, funding educational projects in Jamaica, Ethiopia and Ghana, and played his last show in Paris on April 1.

Lois Wilson

Keith Reid

Procol Harum lyricist

BORN 1946

KEITH REID, the non-performing lyric writer of magisterial rockers Procol Harum, knew his obituary would dwell on the band's debut single – the Summer of Love outlier smash A Whiter Shade Of Pale – to the exclusion of everything else he'd contributed to over the ensuing six decades. These included 11 Procol studio albums (Reid was only absent from their 2017 swan song *Novum*), two sets with his Keith Reid Project, and lyrics for others (including Michel Polnareff, Southside Johnny and John Farnham, whose You're The Voice was a hit in 1986). Influenced by Dylan's mid-'60s phase, Welwyn Garden City-born Reid took, "a painterly approach to lyrics," he told this writer, though he acknowledged his family's Holocaust experiences, "coloured me… I was aware of the dark side." Nine months before his death from cancer, he admitted he had come round to his most celebrated work. "I couldn't stand hearing A Whiter Shade Of Pale for a period," he said. "But I came to realise how great it was."

Martin Aston

Righteous selector: Jah Shaka at work on his sound system.

Getty (3), Capital Pictures

Nora Forster: punk and its milieu changed her life for ever.

Nora Forster

Lydon's better half

BORN 1942

NORA MAIER was born in Munich as the Battle of Stalingrad drew to its end. In the post-war years her newspaper editor father Franz Karl Maier prosecuted Nazis and fought for press freedom. A model and sometime actress whose first husband was West German pop star Frank Forster, Nora later promoted gigs in Germany and Britain. Having moved to London in the late '60s, punk and its milieu changed her life when her 14-year-old daughter Ari Up formed The Slits and she met Johnny Rotten in Westwood and McLaren's boutique Sex in 1975. They married in 1979, and remained a solid partnership in the years that followed, as Lydon navigated his post-Pistols life and Public Image Ltd. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2018, prompting PiL's 2023 song of love and remembrance Hawaii. Her full-time carer, Lydon spoke movingly of his wife's illness, recognising how her personality endured and saying, "she will enjoy every step of it, and I'm here to make sure of that because she'd do the same for me."

Ian Harrison

Ian Bairnson

Esteemed guitar-for-hire.

BORN 1953

CLIVE JAMES recalled turning up the radio to hear every last note of Ian Bairnson's "exultant" solo on Kate Bush's Wuthering Heights, while Pilot's 1975 smash January saw the Scot craft pop hooks. Born in the Shetland Islands, Bairnson picked with a sixpence, but soon coined it as a favoured session-guitarist in Edinburgh then London, eventually playing on 100-plus LPs by artists from Kate Bush to Neil Diamond to Paul McCartney & Wings. Together with Pilot's David Paton, Bairnson was also an integral part of prog act The Alan Parsons Project from 1975 to 1990, helping the sometime Pink Floyd (and Pilot) producer define his own sound. In 2018, Bairnson's dementia ended a live career that had seen him flank Sting and Stanley Clarke, but he continued recording. When he died on April 7, his wife Leila mourned "the kindest, most loving husband."

James McNair

THEY ALSO SERVED

HITMAKER **PETER SHELLEY** (b.1943) was the original Alvin Stardust, singing, writing and producing 1973 hit My Coo Ca Choo: he continued to do the same when Bernard Jewry took on the Ziggy-inspired Stardust persona, and hits including the 1974 Number 1 Jealous Mind followed. Earlier, Shelley was a successful A&R man at Decca (signing **Amen Corner**, **Ten Years After** and a pre-King Crimson **Giles, Giles & Fripp**), co-founded Magnet Records and had solo hit singles, the biggest being Love Me, Love My Dog in '75.

ROCKER and bluesman **BILLY 'THE KID' EMERSON** (b.1925) was, until his death, the oldest living musician to have recorded for Sun Records. His 1955 single Red Hot became a rockabilly standard, while **Elvis** covered his When It Rains It Pours in 1957. Emerson also cut sides for Vee-Jay, Chess and his own Tarpon imprint. After, he said, waking up screaming in a mortuary, he turned to preaching in the late '60s.

BASSIST **CLIFF FISH** (above, b.1949) played with Nottingham rockers **Paper Lace** from 1967. Fame came knocking when they won ITV talent show Opportunity Knocks in 1973: a UK Number 1 with Billy Don't Be A Hero followed in '74, and the same year The Night Chicago Died topped the US charts. The band's last hit was the Nottingham Forest FC tune We've Got The Whole World In Our Hands in 1978. After their 1980 split, Fish later played in reunions.

OHIO-born soul singer and keyboardist **BOOKER NEWBERRY III** (below, b.1956) first played in **Mystic Nights**, **Impact** and **Sweet Thunder**, whose Baby I Need Your Love Today was a US R&B hit in 1978, and whose Everybody's Singin' Love Songs was a favourite on the UK soul scene. His debut 45 Love Town was a Number 6 UK hit in 1983. He continued to record into the '90s.

GUITARIST **LASSE WELLANDER** (b.1952) played with **ABBA** from 1974, appearing on all their LPs from 1975's *ABBA*, and touring with the group. After their split, he played on **Andersson** and **Ulvaeus**'s musical projects and **Agnetha Fältskog**'s solo LPs. He also worked with many Swedish musicians, recorded solo, and returned for ABBA's *Voyage* reunion in 2021.

TRUMPETER **DUSKO GOYKOVICH** (b.1931) played jazz in Yugoslavia before moving to West Germany in 1956, where he played with **Chet Baker**, **Stan Getz** and **Kurt Edelhagen**. A spot at Newport in 1958 raised his profile: in the years that followed, he played with **Miles Davis**, **Sonny Rollins** and **Dizzy Gillespie** among others, and recorded LPs including *Swinging Macedonia*, *East Of Montenegro* and *Balkan Blue*.

KEYBOARDIST AND VOCALIST **VIVIAN TRIMBLE** (b.1963) was a founder member of New York indie-funkers **Luscious Jackson**, whose flexible virtuosity, irreverence and rapping skills earmarked them as a kind of distaff **Beastie Boys**. After breakthrough 1992 EP In Search Of Manny, Trimble played on the band's first two albums for the Beasties' Grand Royal label, as well as 1996 side-project the **Kostars** with bandmate **Jill Cunniff**. Leaving in 1999, Trimble formed **Dusty Trails** with The Breeders' **Josephine Wiggs**, and worked as a choreographer.

BRITISH BEAT POET and author **ROYSTON ELLIS** (b.1941) was described by John Lennon as "England's answer to Allen Ginsberg". A precocious teenager, Ellis performed his poetry on-stage in the late '50s, backed by **The Shadows**, then bonded with the nascent **Beatles** at a Liverpool reading in 1960. Lennon claimed Ellis had given the band their first dope and reputedly inspired Paperback Writer. Three books about music and the Big Beat Scene followed, before he left the UK at 20 and became an inveterate traveller. He did, however, reconnect with **Cliff Richard** for a cameo in 1964's Wonderful Life film.

SINGER **APRIL STEVENS** (below, b.1929) had solo hits from the early '50s, and caused scandal with 1959's suggestive Teach Me Tiger. Her biggest success came duetting with her brother **Nino Tempo** on a Grammy-winning US Number 1/UK Number 17 version of Deep Purple in 1963. Scoring another hit with Whispering soon after, in 1967 they covered David Gates and Warren Zevon on *All Strung Out*. The duo's compositions were covered by **Vashti Bunyan**, **John Travolta**, **Marc Almond** and **Trini Lopez**.

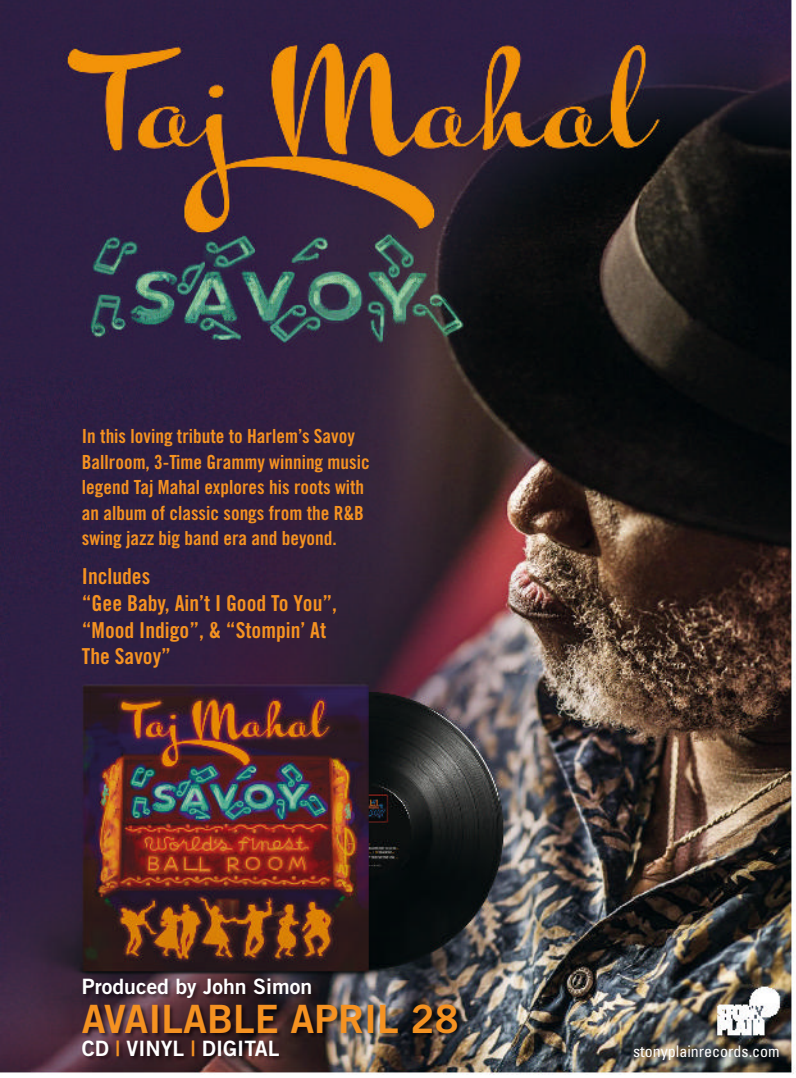
ROCK GUITARIST **GUY BAILEY** (b.c.1961) joined Gateshead/London rockers the **Queerboys** in 1984, who renamed themselves the **Quireboys** in 1987. Bailey appeared on 1990's Number 2 LP *A Bit Of What You Fancy* and Top 20 single Hey You before their 1993 split. After in-band disagreement on ownership of the name, Bailey joined vocalist and co-writer Spike's Quireboys in 2022. He also fronted his own band **Thirsty**.

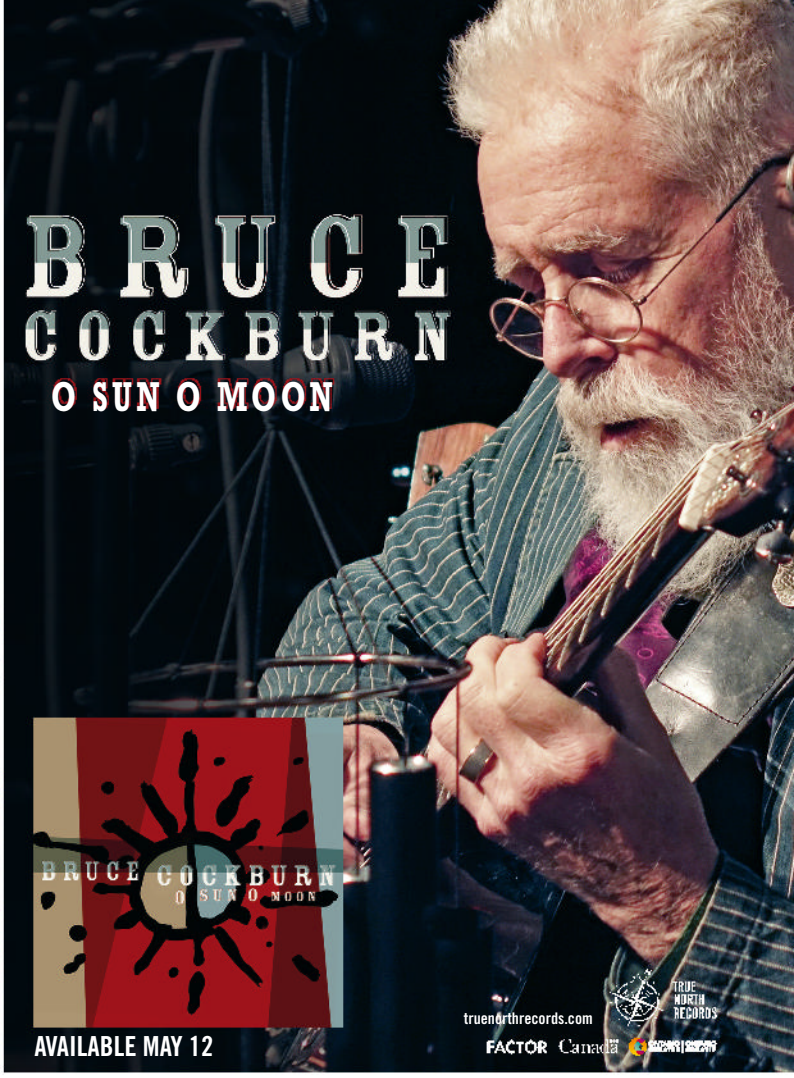
BASSIST **JOHN REGAN** (b.1951) played with **Peter Frampton** from 1979 to 2011, and was a member of Ace Frehley's **Comet** from 1984 to 1990. As a sessioneer he played with **The Rolling Stones**, **David Bowie**, **Billy Idol**, **Chip Taylor** and **David Lee Roth**. He was also a radio host, broadcasting from his hometown of Poughkeepsie, New York.

STUDIO ENGINEER and producer **YVES CHAMBERLAND** (b.1933) presided over Paris-region recording spaces including Studio Davout and Château D'Hérouville. In 1973 he founded the Cy jazz imprint and, in 1991, co-founded the Dreyfus jazz label. Chamberland's production credits included **Jean-Luc Ponty**, **Nina Simone**, **Michel Petrucciani** and **Vince Taylor**. **David Bowie** had recently retired the Ziggy Stardust role that was partially inspired by Taylor when he recorded, under Chamberland's management at Château D'Hérouville, 1973's *Pin Ups* LP.

John Mulvey and Ian Harrison

Ray Stevenson, Alamy, Getty (3)





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SCAN ME TO LISTEN

At the sign of the swinging symbol: (anti-clockwise from above) Prince with gold chain-veil at Radio City, NY; the artist with dancer Mayte; the signs for male and female graphically combine; the sleeves of '*Love Symbol*' and My Name Is Prince; the Paisley Park-produced floppy disc to keep the design world up to speed; (below) *The Hits/The B Sides*.

JUNE 1993

...Prince changes his name to ⏚

JUNE 7 Just eight months earlier he'd declared on 45, "My name is Prince and I am funky." A Number 7 hit, it came from an LP that went straight into the UK charts at Number 1. Curiously, no one knew quite how to name it, its title being an unpronounceable symbol featuring the male and female signs combined, seemingly enhanced with a trumpet.

The symbol also, it was said, echoed the alchemical sign for soapstone. There was transformation in the air. MTV had reported Prince was to release a new EP called Papa on his 35th birthday this June 7. Instead he announced that he would no longer go by his long-standing name. From now on he was ⏚. A floppy disc was duly mailed out from his Paisley Park headquarters in Minneapolis so designers could have access to this unique graphic.

It wasn't the first time this year that Prince had messed with his public's heads. In April a statement was released announcing, "Prince to retire from studio recording." It added that he would honour his deal with his label Warner Bros using archival recordings, and would work in theatre, film, clubs and "interactive media." Billboard reported the name-change news on page 18 of their June 19 issue, and wondered if Prince's behaviour was making Michael Jackson look normal.

He had hit upon the plan in Puerto Rico, it seemed. "I acted on the advice of my spirit," he told Q in 1994, "it's very significant." Even those who worked with the artist were nonplussed: employees at Paisley Park settled on 'Boss'. Speaking to Vox, drummer Michael Bland had complete faith in the Boss's wisdom, however. "I am in awe of him," he said. "He has made it harder for me to deal with mere mortals."

The true believers – some of whom were positing that their idol was about to change his name again, to Victor – nodded approvingly, but the frustration in Warner Bros's marketing department can be imagined. A conflict was building. Though he had signed a deal for a reputed $100 million in September '92, the ever-prolific ⏚ was frustrated that Warners were unwilling to release an album every six months, like James Brown used to do, and believed they had failed to market the '*Love Symbol*' LP properly. As recounted in Ronin Ro's 2011 book Prince: The Music And The Masks, at one point he offered to leave the label, and was shaken when "sternly" told by a Warners executive that he simply could not.

To add to the bad blood, Prince's major-backed boutique label Paisley Park was underperforming: an album ⏚ produced for singer Carmen Electra had tanked, and Warners turned down *Goldnigga* by his band the New Power Generation. So there was a logic, of sorts, at work: if ⏚ could say that Warners had signed Prince but not ⏚, how could they demand he record their way?

This was the new reality, but life went on. On June 14 at Paisley Park, Prince filmed The Undertaker, a live power trio project where he covered Honky Tonk Woman. On 18 June he played a warm-up date for his upcoming Act II

"I want people to think I'm insane."
PRINCE

Getty (5), Alamy (2), Shutterstock

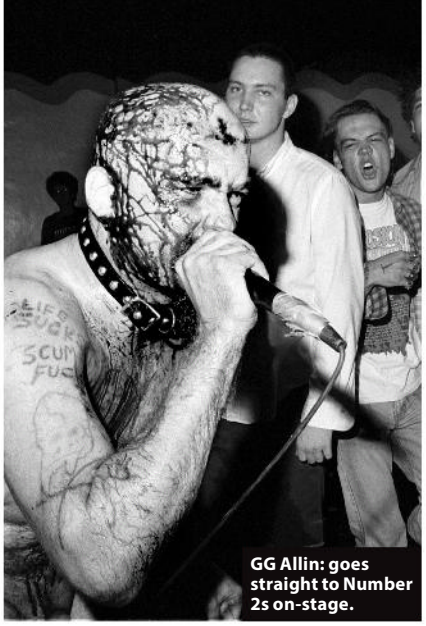
tour at Paisley Park. Other projects of the moment included Glam Slam Ulysses, an erotic stage show loosely based on The Odyssey by Homer, which premiered at his LA club in August. In 2016, Matt Thorne's Prince: The Man And His Music quoted tour manager Alan Leeds saying suggested his wife Gwen should be the face of a new TV-advertised mail order service for his music. Inevitably, he also worked on new recordings.

But a new LP – *Come* – would not follow until 1994. Instead, over summer, Warners and their errant signing compiled *The Hits/ The B Sides*, with four unreleased songs. In time people were calling him, 'The Artist Formerly Known As Prince.' On the Act II tour, which began in Birmingham in July, dancer Mayte Garcia portrayed a masked as he sang My Name Is Prince off-stage. At times he called for the crowd to record his live sets if they wanted to keep up with him.

"If people think I'm insane, fine," told NME in February 1995, shortly before appearing at the Brit awards with 'SLAVE' written on his left cheek. "I want people to think I'm insane… I got a whole new mindset when I became symbol. I can't explain how I feel now compared to then."

In 1996 he released the poorly performing *Chaos And Disorder*, fulfilling his Warners contract. In May 2000, he announced that the expiry of his publishing contract with Warner-Chappell Music was another important milestone. "I will now go back to using my name," he wrote, "instead of the symbol I adopted to free myself from all undesirable relationships."

Ian Harrison



GG Allin: goes straight to Number 2s on-stage.

GG Allin dies

JUNE 28 **A noted creator of outrage given to violent acts and defecating on-stage, notorious punk GG Allin dies of a heroin overdose aged 36 at the Manhattan apartment of Stink Finger vocalist Johnny Puke. Finding him dead, Johnny Puke poses for Polaroids with the corpse before calling for assistance. The previous night at The Gas Station club, Allin played just three or four songs before leading a line of revellers through the streets, naked. He's buried on July 3, in his leather jacket and signature jockstrap, and leaves a legacy of foul on-stage behaviour and, fronting bands including The Murder Junkies and The Scumfish, releases including *Freaks, Faggots, Drunks & Junkies*, *You'll Never Tame Me* and Sickest Of The Sick.**

Fine time: New Order's (from left) Bernard Sumner, Gillian Gilbert and Stephen Morris do their bit in Dublin.

NEW ORDER PLAY FOR PEACE

JUNE 5 With comeback LP *Republic* in the UK Top 20, New Order play their first show for nearly four years at the Dublin Point, in support of the Peace Together charity to end sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Also on the bill are Something Happens, The Stunning and Hothouse Flowers' Liam Ó'Maónlaí, though a billed Sinéad O'Connor pulls out.

Simultaneous Peace Together concerts in London and Belfast headlined by Peter Gabriel and The Fatima Mansions respectively are cancelled, due to poor ticket sales. In July a *Peace Together* compilation album appears featuring new recordings by Blur, My Bloody Valentine and U2. After 12 dates in Europe and the US, New Order play the Reading Festival, their last show for five years.

ALSO ON!

ANOTHER VU

1 The Velvet Underground begin their re-formation tour at the Playhouse in Edinburgh. After further European dates they play Glastonbury on June 25 and five dates with U2, but the group dissolve again in July when tensions arise between Lou Reed and John Cale.

BUZZERS BACK

2 Buzzcocks release *Trade Test Transmissions*, their first LP in 14 years. On the same day they play Warrington's Parr Hall; shows in Manchester and Scotland follow.

ON THE BEAT PETE

11 Pete Townshend releases solo LP *Psychoderelict*. "I wanted to write songs about the nature of truth," he tells Guitar Player of the concept LP, "[and] how it's changing in the modern world."

SILK SASH CASH

12 It's reported that Johnny Cash has left the Mercury label and signed with Rick Rubin's Def American. "I'll be expanding my scope of activity while experiencing the excitement of today's contemporary music," says Cash in a statement. *American Recordings* follows in 1994, featuring songs by Leonard Cohen, Tom Waits and more.

RADIO RADIO

13 London alternative radio station XFM put the Great Expectations show on at Finsbury Park, featuring The Cure, Sugar, Belly, Senseless Things, Carter USM and more. XFM are one of 48 stations who have applied for a radio licence.

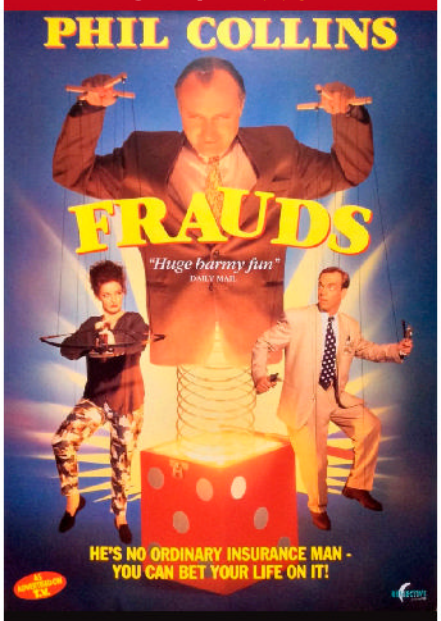
TOP TEN

EUROCHART ALBUMS JUNE 19

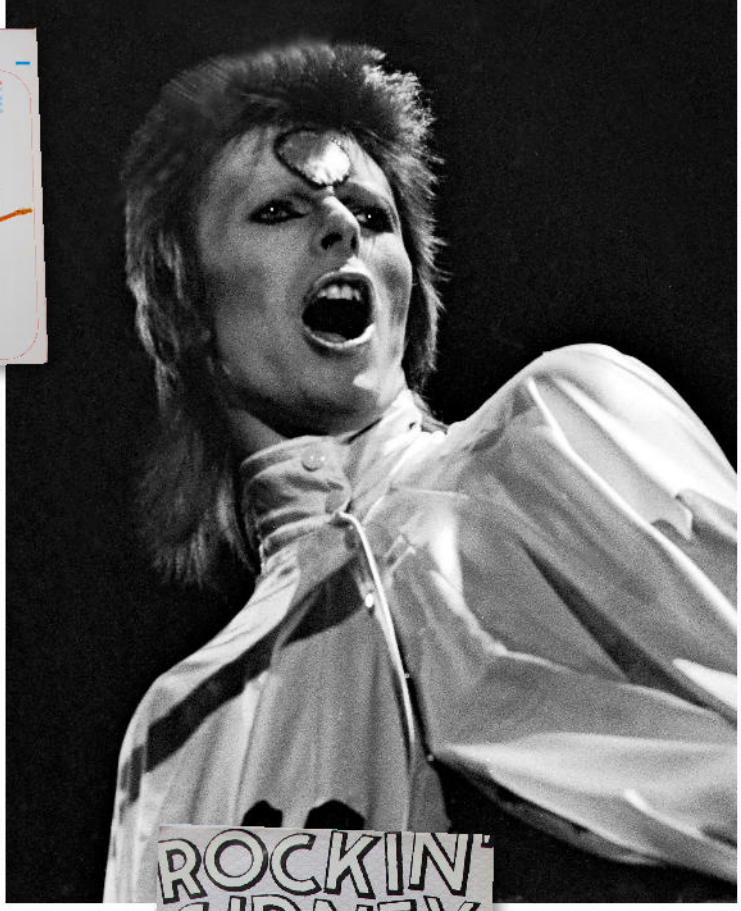
1 **2 UNLIMITED** NO LIMITS! BYTE
2 **DIRE STRAITS** IN THE NIGHT VERTIGO
3 **JANET JACKSON** JANET VIRGIN
4 **EROS RAMAZZOTTI** TUTTE STORIE DDD
5 **GEORGE MICHAEL & QUEEN WITH LISA STANSFIELD** FIVE LIVE EP PARLOPHONE
6 **ACE OF BASE** HAPPY NATION MEGA
7 **R.E.M.** AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE WARNER BROS.
8 **VARIOUS** THE BODYGUARD OST ARISTA
9 **BON JOVI** KEEP THE FAITH JAMBCO/POLYGRAM
10 **ERIC CLAPTON** UNPLUGGED DUCK/ REPRISE

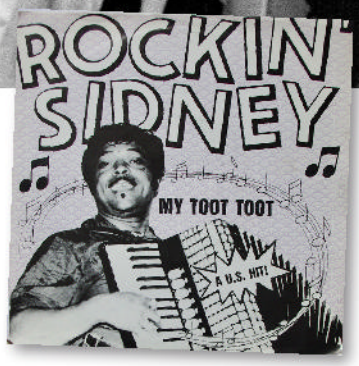
2 Unlimited: Antwerpy chirpy bleep bleep.

AD ARCHIVE 1993



What do you mean, he was in a film after Buster? An oddball blackmail caper released on June 4, here Phil stars as an unhinged insurance investigator up against Hugo Weaving.





The band-name's tale: (clockwise from above left) The Yardbirds put their stamp on rock'n'roll; Bowie takes Ziggy for a stroll on the South Coast in 1973; Rockin' Sidney gets his Toot Toot out; 'Schizoid Man' Patrick McGoohan in The Prisoner.

Which band had the first logo?

Let us answer your rock'n'roll queries and bring enlightenment where there is doubt.

I've always liked The Yardbirds' logo. I remember going to see them in the '60s and seeing it on Jim McCarty's bass drum. One thing I've always wondered is, are they the first band to have their own logo?

Rick Burton, via e-mail

MOJO says: Rick, you may well be right. The distinctive, loopy Yardbirds logo – suitable for being reproduced on any nearby surface by the artful fan – was designed in 1963 by the band's managerial assistant and live compère Hamish Grimes (who was also the man Eric Clapton believes graffiti'd the words 'Clapton Is God' around London in the mid-'60s). Other big groups of the moment had logos: think The Kinks' 'Kinky Boots' visual created by Mick Avory's father in 1964, The Who's 'vertical arrow' insignia designed by Brian Pike for the band's November '64 Marquee residency, or The Beatles' evolving 'Drop T' on Ringo's bass drum, initially devised by Balham drum shop owner Ivor Arbiter in 1963. But none of these appeared on record sleeves until much later. However, Hamish Grimes' logo appeared on The Yardbirds' '64-67 US and UK LP releases, (excepting 1966's *Yardbirds/'Roger The Engineer'*), and so predates other such logo-sporting contenders as The Monkees, Love and The Doors – in fact Jim McCarty's Yardbirds still use it! In terms of a regular, eye-catching musical graphic device, we'd add that record labels both indie and hip were early to the party, with examples including Sun's crowing rooster designed by John G Parker in 1952, Stax's pile of singles (on active duty from 1961, with the 'clicking fingers' icon following in 1968), and Motown's map label design in use from 1961. We could go on. And naturally, if anyone can beat The Yardbirds for group logo far-sightedness, we want to hear about it.

Getty (2), Shutterstock

STAGE INVASIONS (REDUX)

On the subject of stage invasions (Ask MOJO 354), can I give a mention to my friend Neil Paul from Pimlico who now runs the Tertulia book and record shop in Westport, County Mayo. A serial stage-invader, his three most memorable were (1) The Stranglers at Battersea Park 1978. Neil crept on-stage as strippers came on and stayed there dancing for the whole of Nice 'N' Sleazy before mooning the audience (still on YouTube). (2) The Smiths, County Hall (car park) 1984. Morrissey stopped the gig as Neil scaled the walls, reported in Time Out's greatest London gigs. (3) Bruce Springsteen, Wembley July 4, 1985. Bruce stopped the gig as Neil scaled the lighting rig above the stage, as reported in the next day's News Of The World.

Colin Staplehurst, via e-mail

MOJO says: Well done, Neil! And thanks also to Graham Elliott of Ramsgate, who recalls The Specials in Bracknell in '79, when the band invaded the crowd to confront 'sieg heiling' skinheads, he got tied up on-stage by a microphone cable, and the police with dogs were called.

WHAT IS A TOOT-TOOT?

"Don't mess with my Toot Toot," advised Louisiana's Rockin' Sidney in his 1985 song of that name. Many blues folk have covered the song since. But what exactly is a Toot Toot? And what's the worst that can happen if you let someone mess with it?

Paul Slade, via e-mail

MOJO says: A Toot Toot refers to the French "toute-toute" (or "all-all") a catch-all phrase meaning, well, everything, suggesting accordionist Sidney was concerned with a higher philosophical purpose than the more suggestive interpretation listeners might have got from the 1985 hit UK version by Denise LaSalle. Interested parties should also check the Fats Domino & Doug Kershaw cover. As for the consequences of messing with someone's Toot Toot, we refer you to cheery answer tune I'm Messing With Toot Toot by Zydeco drummer Leo 'The Bull' Thomas, who seems to have emerged from the experience unscathed, and whose son Leroy leads the Zydeco Roadrunners.

BOWIE IN BOURNEMOUTH

When David Bowie played in Bournemouth on the 1973 *Aladdin Sane* tour, BBC's Nationwide programme did a short feature on him. At one point Bowie can be seen coming out of a Bournemouth hotel but does anyone know which hotel he stayed at?

Gordon Barclay, via e-mail

MOJO says: It seems that scene was actually filmed at the Bedford Hotel in Brighton two days before Nationwide filmed three tracks at the Bournemouth Winter Gardens. Bowie called the film a "traditional 'Good heavens, whatever next' type" of piece, but it's well worth a watch.

HELP MOJO

In 1967 Patrick McGoohan's groundbreaking series The Prisoner ran on television. Episode number five, entitled The Schizoid Man, was one of the most iconic episodes. Two years later King Crimson released their debut album *In The Court Of The Crimson King* which features their signature song, 21st Century Schizoid Man. Was [lyricist] Peter Sinfield influenced by the episode, or just coincidence? We need… information!

Robert J. Hurns, Illinois

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Audio, Amigos

Win! An Audio Pro C5 MkII speaker, *and* a 12-month Qobuz music subscription.

THE COMPACT wireless multi-room speaker from Scandinavian audio specialist Audio Pro, the C5 MKII produces a powerful yet detailed sound, while its design makes it perfect for smaller household spaces. Worth £300 and in eye-catching limited-edition Sage Green, it's compatible with Google Chromecast, AirPlay 2 and Audio Pro's own multi-room system, while its easy-to-use control panel features user-friendly preset buttons. This month we have one to give away, plus a 12-month subscription to high-quality streaming and download platform Qobuz worth £129.99. Qobuz, whose hi-resolution music library boasts more than 100 million tracks of jazz, classical, rock and beyond, plus informative editorial content, celebrates its 15th anniversary this year.

Be in it to win it by completing the crossword, then send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 356 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **July 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com.

For more info go to www.audiopro.com

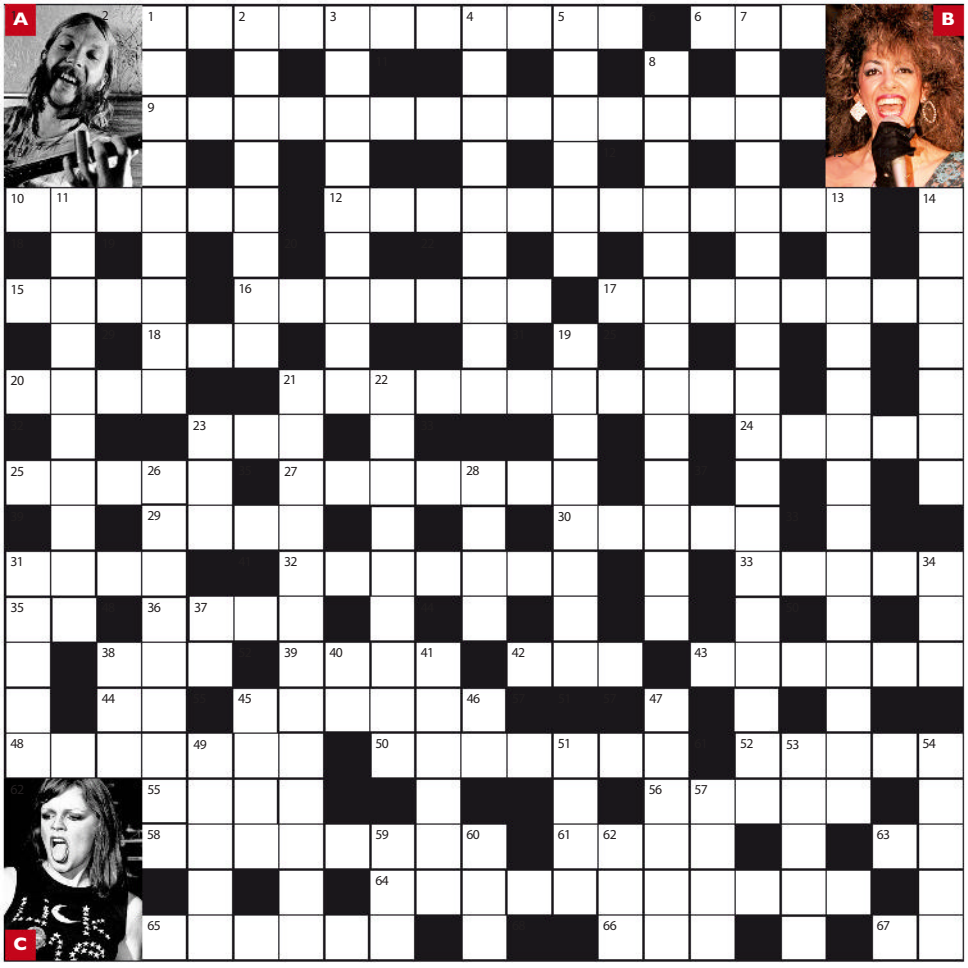
ANSWERS

MOJO 354

Across: 1 Little Richard, 9 It Began In Afrika, 10 Bellbottoms, 13 Assassing, 18 Invictus, 19 What A Shame, 20 Ze, 21 Bez, 22 Lone, 23 Everyone, 26 Yoo, 27 Grit, 28 Laser, 29 Les, 30 Gypsy, 31 Trouble, 33 Gyrocopter, 36 Leather, 38 Ye, 39 EMI, 40 Never, 41 Middle Mass, 43 Rota, 44 Fuji, 47 Ill, 48 Poison, 51 Sony, 52 Cinerama, 53 Na Na, 55 Iz, 57 BGO, 58 Outsiders, 61 Dior, 63 VU, 64 Ethel Waters, 65 Psycho.

Down: 1 Lois Lane, 2 Taboo, 3 Legit, 4 Ringmaster, 5 Cans, 6 As Fast As You Can, 7 Do It Again, 8 Brass, 11 E.G., 12 Techno Pop, 14 I'm A Loser, 15 Green River, 16 Sweet Relief, 17 Bubblegum, 18 Izzy Stradlin, 22 Logical Song, 24 Vito, 25 Elementary, 27 Gyre, 34 Tea, 35 Resonator, 37 Rea, 38 Yella, 42 Me, 43 Rin, 45 UC, 46 Jivers, 47 Im, 48 Pride, 49 Sabre, 50 Nao, 51 Shout, 54 Air, 56 Zit, 59 SSC, 60 RKO, 63 VA.

Winners: Martin Haworth of **Morpeth** wins a Lenco LS-600WA record-player and speaker system.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (5,6)
6 A place for Surfin', French Kissin' and a Rocket (1,1,1)
9 Dinosaur Jr eye the edges? (5,3,7)
10 Joni Mitchell in meteorological mood (5)
12 The Dickies' hit fruity chant (6,6)
15 Spandau Ballet strike it rich (4)
16 David Bowie gets pagan (7)
17 Whereon The Dentists writhed in '87 (8)
18 Robyn Hitchcock's beady LP from '90 (3)
20 John Cale, spooked in '74 (4)
21 Ex-voice of Pectoralz (5,6)
23 The Band behind The Crunch (3)
24 She took You'll Never Stop Me From Loving You to UK Number 1 in '89 (5)
25 Where Iggy & The Stooges made their UK debut (5)
27 A song you can't stop humming? (7)
29 Eydie Gormé, romantic in Spanish (4)
30 Jerry Hall graced this Roxy LP cover (5)
31 Alias Gene and Dean (4)
32 Pops Staples' first name (7)
33 Live in '71, The Nice (5)
35 Moby and Acti, in sudden pain? (2)
36 Previn, Hunky or Jones (4)
38 Serpentine goths from Frankfurt (3)
39 DJ partner of Stretch (4)
42 A U2 single? (3)
43 Flapping NY doo-woppers The ------ (6)
44 US rapper who led The Maad Circle (2)
45 Label which released music by Thomas The Tank Engine and MC Hammer? (6)
48 Sweden's lords of war history-metal (7)
50 Underworld's number of days off (7)
52 Engineer for Roberta Flack, Diane Schuur, Ashford & Simpson and more (2,3)
55 The anarcho-punks' was Rudimentary (4)
56 Guigsy was their bassist (5)
58 OMD's anti-war hit of 1980 (5,3)
61 Julian Cope's birthplace (4)
63 Ratboys LP ft Elvis In The Freezer (2)
64 King Creosote collaborator also known as Gummi Bako (4,7)
65 Fleetwood Mac in a reverie? (6)
66 A blooming Peter Brötzmann side project (3)
67 Maceo Parker's album for everyone (2)

DOWN

1 Bert Jansch's live-in-Oz LP (9)
2 Art Pepper, literally: -------- Art (3,2,3)
3 Martha & The Muffins' fave place (4,5)
4 The reclusive leader of The La's (3,6)
5 Arnold Schoenberg's kind of music (6)
7 What Polygon Window used his board for (7,2,4,5)
8 ---------- ---- *Eon* (Jean-Michael Jarre) (9,4)
11 A structural weakness for The Pretenders? (5,5)
13 Their hit was Driver's Seat (5,1,3,5)
14 See photoclue B (6,1)
19 Mo'Wax producer ---- ----- Productions (4,4)
21 See photoclue C (6,7)
22 Detroit R&B rockers (4,4)
23 Paul and Linda's sole LP (3)
26 Einstein A Go-Go guys (9)
28 A major work from Al Di Meola? (4)
31 You can't see Kevin Morby's old band for the trees (5)
34 Owners Of A Lonely Heart, tellers of Wondrous Stories (3)
37 Severed Heads' 2002 'Pop Music' album (2)
38 Scotland's premier R&B/funk band (1,1,1)
40 AKA studio wiz Eric Thorngren (1,1)
41 Frontline Assembly's *Tactical* ------ *Implant* (6)
45 Phil Spector wanted to go back to it (4)
46 Ohio slo-core band (2)
47 My Eyes ------ You (Frankie Valli) (6)
49 The Sonny Rollins Quartet's *Madness* in '56 (5)
51 10cc had them under the bed (4)
52 Sunny Day Real Estate's planner (5)
54 Ray, Dave, Mick and Pete's group from Muswell Hill, The ----- (5)
57 In the day, Japanese cassette player maker of distinction (4)
59 Classical, Sleeping or Panic! (3)
60 What Yazoo were called in America (3)
62 Superband of the Fine Young Cannibals, Steve Martin and John Candy? (1,1,1)

Grin and bear it: Smile (from left) Brian May, Roger Taylor and Tim Staffell, Royal Albert Hall, London, February 27, 1969.

Tim Staffell and Smile

They came together in college in London. And when he split they got a guy called Freddie in and became Queen…

HELLO AUTUMN 1968

Brian [May, guitar] and me had played in [band] 1984 when we were at [Hampton] school, and when we left we decided we wanted to carry on and be a heavy rock band, with harmonies. I was at Ealing Art College, where I met Freddie [Bulsara, AKA Mercury], and Brian was at Imperial College. We advertised on the Imperial College notice board for a drummer, and who should turn up but Roger [Taylor], who was at dental college.

It was less of a serious audition, just a knockabout really, in the basement of a student friend's flat in Addison Gardens in Shepherd's Bush. Old threadbare Persian carpets, magnolia walls. It was the era of Portobello Road and bohemian fashion – hair down our backs, crushed velvet flares, Frank Zappa and Grateful Dead T-shirts… I remember Brian had a blue Marines jacket and I had a bottle-green army coat. I think Brian would have had his amp, I would have had mine, and my bass. We were pretty loud, but sensitive about the noise! It was a cup of tea situation – I don't think any of us smoked dope at that point, and Brian never did. I think we might have played Tim Hardin's If I Were A Carpenter and Step On Me, a song that Brian and I had written in 1984, and something like Sunshine Of Your Love and White Room by Cream. We were both pretty blown away because we'd never seen a drummer who was able to play so flamboyantly. After that we took the notice down, because there was no need to go any further. And so, Smile was born. I think the name was my idea, and the logo was my execution as well.

We got straight into gigging. Roger lived in Truro, and there was a healthy little live band scene going on down there. It was the first band that any of us were in that we felt had a shot. We met Lou Reisner from Mercury Records and he took a punt on us to record a single [Earth] and later we cut some more tracks… we were pretty excited because we thought, We've arrived! Earth must be worth a few bob now, but I haven't got a copy.

GOODBYE LATE 1969

The last gig was probably in Cornwall, or maybe Imperial College – we supported Jimi Hendrix there once. Smile was a good little band, and we had a fairly interesting semi-professional career while we negotiated college. Until I did the dirty and, heh, disappeared at the tail-end of '69.

When you start networking with other musicians, you move outside your original fairly parochial boundaries. I was getting tired of the heaviness and had started to get interested in a more introspective kind of music, and I started auditioning for bands more in line with that. Eventually I hooked up with Colin Peterson, the Bee Gees' drummer, and I joined his band Humpy Bong. I probably told the guys, "I'm off", around some flat somewhere. I think that for a brief moment, they may have felt a little bit… disenfranchised. I wasn't unhappy, I think I was concerned that it wasn't gonna go anywhere. And I knew, well, if my heart's not in it, I'm not going to be giving it my best anyway.

And so I left Smile to the stewardship of Freddie, who, by osmosis, was part of Smile's extended social family. I think he used to have a word with Brian and say, "I'd be much better in Smile than Tim is!" And he was right, it was exactly what needed to happen. I couldn't have done it with them.

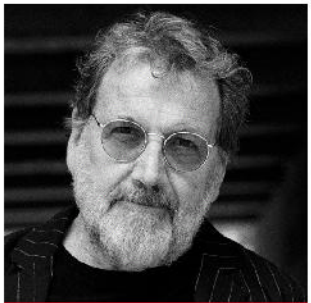
I was still engaged musically – the great thing about Humpy Bong was that I met Jonathan Kelly. I was privileged to work with him. I didn't feel any kind of jealousy [towards Queen], although, certainly, by the end of the '70s, I was very envious of the power that they were wielding.

I did socialise with them sporadically afterwards. I went to their 20th anniversary, not long before Freddie passed, at the Groucho Club, and in 1992 I played a concert with them at the Marquee. A few years ago Brian phoned me up and said, "Do you fancy having a crack at the vocal on Doin' Alright for the Bohemian Rhapsody movie?" Since then we've been in contact, on and off, again.

I'm still writing and I'm working on my fourth album now. It's been hard to try and move out from under that shadow, but I do think there's some cracking stuff there.

As told to Ian Harrison

Tim's third solo LP Wayward Child is out in June. New single Patch is out now. See timstaffell.com



"I joined Humpy Bong and told the guys, 'I'm off.'"
TIM STAFFELL

No laughing matter: Smile (Staffell third from right, May sitting next to him on car) and friends; (left) Tim now.

Douglas Puddifoot © Queen Productions Ltd

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